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SERMONS

ON

PRACTICAL SUBJECTS.

BY

ROBERT WALKER,

LATE ONE OF THE MINISTERS OF THE HIGH CHURCH OF EDINBURGH.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED, A

CHARACTER OF THE AUTHOR.

By HUGH BLAIR, D. D. his Colleague.

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SERMON I.

1 THESSALONIANS ii. 4.

But as we were allowed of God to be put in truſt with the goſpel, even ſo we ſpeak not as pleaſing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.

WHEN we compare ourſelves with the primitive Chriſtians, we are obliged to confeſs that, in every reſpect, we fall greatly ſhort of their attainments. We ſeem to be creatures of a lower rank, incapable of reaching the ſame degree of perfection with them: And indeed it is to be ſuſpected, that through a falſe and vicious modeſty, we look upon theſe ancient worthies as examples which, though we ought to imitate, we can never hope to equal. Hence we reſt ſatisfied with any diſtant reſemblance we can attain, thinking that if we are not altogether

gether unlike to them, it is all that a modern Chriſtian can expect.

This is a groſs and moſt pernicious miſtake. The gate of heaven is no wider now than it was ſeventeen hundred years ago. The law of God extends as far as it did when the Apoſtles lived; and I know of no indulgence granted to us which did not exiſt in the earlieſt times of Chriſtianity. The church of Rome indeed hath taught, that ſome eminent Chriſtians have done more than was ſtrictly neceſſary for their own ſalvation. But no ſuch doctrine is to be found in Scripture: Nay, on the contrary, we are told, that when we have done all, we are ſtill unprofitable ſervants, and have done no more than what was our duty to do. To this day, therefore, we are bound to the ſame ſtrictneſs and purity, to the ſame mortification and ſelf-denial, to the ſame zeal and ſtedfaſtneſs, which diſtinguiſhed the primitive Chriſtians; and it is impoſſible to deviſe any excuſe for our degeneracy from their bright example. They were all men of like paſſions with ourſelves: they had the ſame corrupt nature to ſtrive againſt,

againſt, the ſame temptations to reſiſt, the ſame enemies to overcome. Their advantages for performing their duty were not greater than ours: on the contrary, beſides all that they poſſeſſed, we have the benefit of their example and experience. God's hand is not ſhortened, the blood of Chriſt hath loſt none of its virtue, his interceſſion is no leſs prevalent, nor is the power of his Spirit in the leaſt impaired by length of time or conſtant exerciſe. "He is the ſame "yeſterday, to-day, and for ever:" So that we are entirely without excuſe, if we do not both aim at and actually attain the ſame degrees of holineſs and purity with any of thoſe that have gone before us.

Let us then conſider all thoſe perſons celebrated in Scripture-hiſtory, as examples which we not only ought to copy after, but may through God's grace hope to equal: and, inſtead of being dazzled with the luſtre of their virtues, let us ſearch into the principles which influenced their conduct, that, by cheriſhing theſe, we may be animated to go and do as they did.

The Apoſtle mentions, in the text, one of

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diſtinguiſhed efficacy, which I propoſe to make the ſubject of this diſcourſe;—A ſupreme deſire to pleaſe God, who trieth the heart, without regard either to the praiſe or cenſure of men. It was this which ſupported him under the ignominious treatment he met with at Philippi, which he mentions in the ſecond verſe of this chapter, and encouraged him to perſiſt in preaching that goſpel which he had received in truſt from God. It was this which rendered the firſt Chriſtians ſuperior to adverſity in all its frightful forms: and it is the ſame divine principle, which, if once it got the entire poſſeſſion of our hearts, would be a conſtant ſpring of holy obedience, and enable us, by the bleſſing of God, to follow the cloud of witneſſes who have gone before us, through the moſt rugged paths of virtue, untainted with that meanneſs and inconſtancy of behaviour, which are the reproach of ſo many profeſſing Chriſtians in our days.

I propoſe, therefore, through divine aſſiſtance, 1*ſt*, To open the nature and extent of the divine principle mentioned in my

my text; *2dly*, To repreſent the happy effects which would flow from our being animated with this ſteady and prevailing deſire. After which I ſhall conclude with a practical improvement of the ſubject.

I begin with opening the nature and extent of the divine principle mentioned in the text. And to prevent any miſtakes on this head, it may be needful to obſerve, that our making the approbation of God our principal aim does not exclude all regard to the opinion or judgment of our fellow-creatures. We are certainly bound by that great law of our religion, "Thou ſhalt love "thy neighbour as thyſelf," to make the pleaſing of our brethren, by every lawful means, an object of attention, and a ſubordinate end of our conduct. And as our neighbour is commanded to love us as himſelf, both reaſon and religion teach us to render ourſelves as amiable to him as we can, that ſo we may facilitate his performance of that important duty.

Neither, on the other hand, are we wholly to diſregard the cenſures of men, or be al-

together unconcerned, when our reputation is blackened by injurious calumnies. "A "good name is better than precious oint- "ment." It is a ſpecial bleſſing, which we are to receive with thankfulneſs from the hand of God: and it is our duty to preſerve it as carefully as we can. Without a good name no man can be uſeful in the world. To neglect it therefore, where it does not proceed from a conſciouſneſs of guilt, is certainly, in moſt caſes, a very culpable indifference. Thus far, then, the judgment of men is to be regarded: but then we muſt pleaſe our brethren, only ſo far as it is pleaſing to God. In every caſe we muſt ſtate the matter thus: Whether is it wiſer to obey God or man? to fear thoſe who, after they have killed the body, have no more that they can do; or to fear him who, after he hath killed, can deſtroy both ſoul and body in hell? We muſt not only contemn the favour of men when compared with the approbation of God, but learn to value it among thoſe tranſitory things, which are only deſirable as means for attaining a higher end.

In

In like manner, the diſpleaſure of men, if unjuſt, muſt be reckoned among our light afflictions, which are but for a moment. In ſuch circumſtances, it muſt appear a ſmall matter to us to be judged of man's judgement: "We have one that judgeth us, even "God." That prophecy of our Saviour muſt be conſtantly remembered, that the world will hate us; and his example muſt be ever before our eyes, who condeſcended to be ſcorned, and buffeted, and ſlandered as an impoſtor and blaſphemer; who made himſelf of no reputation, but endured the croſs, and deſpiſed the ſhame, leaving us an example that we ſhould follow his ſteps. In a word, God muſt be pleaſed by all means; his approbation is the one thing needful: he is now our Witneſs, and will, ere long, be our Judge; and in theſe two characters we ought conſtantly to ſet him before us.

This is the temper which the Apoſtle expreſſeth in the text.—I proceed now, in the

Second place, To repreſent the happy effects which would flow from our being animated

mated with this ſteady and prevailing deſire of pleaſing God.

And, in the *1ſt* place, this would make us ready to every good work, by removing all thoſe grounds of heſitation and ſuſpence, whereby double-minded people are perplexed and retarded in their way. A man muſt be very ſlow in his motions, when every ſtep is burdened with ſuch queſtions as theſe: What will men think or ſay of me, if I act in this manner? Will it endanger my reputation, or hurt my intereſt, or prevent my riſing in the world? You will eaſily ſee that a conſiderable time muſt elapſe before all theſe difficult points can be ſettled. Whereas the man whoſe ſingle aim is to pleaſe God, is at once freed from all theſe incumbrances. He no ſooner diſcovers the will of God, than he proceeds immediately to action; and whilſt the other is bewildered with numberleſs conjectures, he goes cheerfully forward, leaving all his temporal concerns in the hands of that God by whoſe law he is governed, and to whoſe diſpoſal he is entirely reſigned. And is not this an unſpeakable advantage,

to-

towards abounding in the fruits of righteouſneſs? How free is the mind of ſuch a man? how firm are his ſteps? He walks ſtraight forward, without deviating into by-paths; and whilſt his conſcience tells him that he is accepted of God, he enjoys a pure and unmixed tranquillity, which the world can neither give nor take away.

A 2*d* happy effect that would flow from our being animated with a ſteady and prevailing deſire of pleaſing God, would be, that our conduct would thereby become conſiſtent and uniform. God alone is invariable. What pleaſed him yeſterday, pleaſeth him to-day as well; and though his commandments are exceeding broad, yet they perfectly agree among themſelves, and make one beautiful and harmonious ſyſtem. Whereas men not only differ from one another, but, at times, from themſelves alſo, and require oppoſite and contradictory things; which makes it abſolutely impoſſible to pleaſe any number of them at one time, or even to continue long in the favour of any one of them, without the moſt diſgraceful inconſiſtencies in our conduct.

But he whoſe ſingle aim is to pleaſe God, in ſome meaſure reſembles the Father of lights, " with whom is no variableneſs, nei- " ther ſhadow of turning."—" His path is " as the morning light that ſhineth more " and more unto the perfect day." His character is ſtill brightening; he advanceth from one degree of grace to another; and is every moment drawing near to the enjoyment of that God whoſe approbation he conſtantly ſought.

In the 3*d* place, the divine principle mentioned in my text, would produce an univerſal obedience to the laws of God, becauſe they are but various ways of compaſſing the important end at which it aims.

The man who is truly animated with it, will, like David, have a " reſpect to all " God's commandments;" and inſtead of complaining that they are grievous, will rather rejoice in being furniſhed with ſuch a variety of opportunities for promoting the glory of his heavenly Father. This divine principle will have influence upon him in the moſt ſecret retirement, as well as when he acts in the open view of the world.

The

The hypocrite, who courts the approbation of men, may be very exact and punctual in the outward exercises of religion: but he who seeks to please God, will not rest in these. He knows that his Father seeth him in secret; he rejoiceth in the thought of it, and therefore omits no duty that bears the stamp of his authority: Yea, his heart is as much engaged in the severest acts of self-denial, as in those instances of obedience which are accompanied with the most immediate pleasure and advantage.——And this leads me to observe, in the

4th place, That a sincere desire of pleasing God, would likewise lessen the difficulties of obedience, and support us under all the sufferings to which our duty may at any time expose us.—Perhaps our duty may be accompanied with much pain and trouble in the world: perhaps, like Paul, we may be shamefully intreated, and, like the rest of the Apostles, looked upon as the filth and offscouring of all things. But still the Christian reasons thus:——'What are these 'things to me? Is it not better to please 'God, than to indulge this corrupt flesh,

'or

'or to ſeek the approbation of man, "whoſe "breath is in his noſtrils?" Should I pleaſe men, I 'could not be the ſervant of 'Chriſt. Thoſe hardſhips and difficulties 'which I now ſuffer, will ſoon be at an 'end: and though my good things are not 'in this life, yet hereafter I ſhall be com-'forted in that ſtate, "where the wicked "ceaſe from troubling, and the weary are "at reſt." 'Was I not forewarned by my 'bleſſed Saviour, that the way to his king-'dom lay through many tribulations; and 'ſhall I now faint, becauſe I find it to be ſo? 'Where can I enjoy ſo good an opportunity 'of ſhowing my regard to my Lord, as by 'ſerving him, now that I am brought to the 'teſt? He is now ſaying to me, as once he 'ſaid to Peter, "Loveſt thou me, more "than theſe?" Awake then, O my ſoul, 'ſoul, and anſwer with that Apoſtle, "Thou "Lord, who knoweſt all things, knoweſt "that I love thee;" and I adore thy good-'neſs in granting me this opportunity of 'teſtifying the ſtrength and ſincerity of my 'love, to thy glory and my unſpeakable 'comfort.' Such will be the ſentiments of the

the man whoſe ſingle aim is to obtain the approbation of God. He will continue firm and unſhaken, amidſt the greateſt ſufferings; whilſt the hypocrite, like the baſe multitude who followed Chriſt only for the loaves, will be offended, and fall off, when a day of trouble comes.——I ſhall only add, in the

5th and *laſt* place, That this divine principle will make a man eaſy and ſatisfied, whatever be his outward condition in the world. He knows that his lot is appointed by God, and his only anxiety is to perform that part which hath been aſſigned to him: being fully aſſured that God, who is no reſpecter of perſons, will graciouſly accept his ſincere endeavours to pleaſe him, whether his ſtation be high or low, whether his circumſtances be rich or poor. His only concern is, that Chriſt may be magnified in his body. Like a determined traveller, he takes the road as he finds it, and makes no complaints, provided it lead him to the end of his journey.

Theſe are ſome of the advantages which would flow from a ſincere and ſteady deſire of

of pleaſing God, and him only.—But to ſet theſe advantages in a more ſtriking light, let us a little examine the oppoſite principle, and take a view of the man whoſe great aim is to obtain the approbation of his fellow-creatures.—Conſider then,

1*ſt*, To what a drudgery he ſubjects himſelf, and what a ſtrange and inconſiſtent part he muſt act. He makes himſelf the ſervant of every man, whoſe cenſure he fears, or whoſe praiſe he covets. He renounceth his own will and reaſon; and to whom? Not to God, who requires nothing but what is holy, juſt, and good; but to creatures like himſelf, ignorant, perverſe, and capricious. He who is reſolved to pleaſe men, muſt follow them through all their jarring inconſiſtent humours. He muſt undo to-morrow what he does to-day; he muſt aſſume a different appearance in every company; he muſt be the ſervant of ſervants, contemptible in the ſight of God, and often deſpiſed by thoſe very men whoſe approbation he courts. For it is to be obſerved, that reſpect and eſteem are ſooner found by an honeſt indifference about them,

than

than by an anxious purſuit of them. They who are ſatisfied with the approbation of their heavenly Father, who ſeeth them in ſecret, are for the moſt part rewarded by him openly, according to what the wiſe man ſaith, "When a man's ways pleaſe the Lord, "he maketh even his enemies to be at peace "with him." Whereas it holds almoſt univerſally true, that men loſe reſpect in proportion as they are obſerved to court it with anxiety, and ſink thereby into greater contempt than otherwiſe they would have done. But,

2*dly*, Let us ſuppoſe that they obtain what they covet ſo earneſtly; How trivial is the acquiſition! "Verily," ſaith our Lord concerning men-pleaſers, "they have their re-"ward." Ah! poor reward! to obtain the favour and friendſhip of dying men, inſtead of the approbation of God, and the teſtimony of a good conſcience; to remember, in hell, that they were well ſpoken of on earth, and that the ſentence of their Judge was the firſt thing that undeceived their fellow-creatures as to their true character. This is the whole amount of their gain, even

ſup-

ſuppoſing that they ſucceed in their purſuit. —But I muſt now add, in the

3*d* place, That this is only a ſuppoſition; for ſo great is the difficulty of pleaſing men, that, after all your pains, it is ten thouſand to one but you ſhall fail in the attempt. The very number of thoſe whom you would pleaſe, renders it almoſt impoſſible to ſucceed in it. We cannot at one time obſerve all who obſerve us, and expect to be pleaſed by us. We are like a perſon who has but a few pieces of money in his pocket, and a crowd of beggars about him. If, according to his beſt judgment, he divides the whole among the moſt needy, that he may pleaſe God, he is ſure of attaining his end. But if he attempts to manage ſo as to pleaſe them, he will be miſerably diſappointed. For tho' the few that ſhared of his bounty, may poſſibly be ſatisfied with their proportion; yet the reſt, who got nothing, will revile, and perhaps curſe him, as penurious and unmerciful. Beſides, the different parties and interfering intereſts of men, makes it impoſſible to pleaſe all. If, in any caſe, you join with one party, the other, of courſe,

will be offended: if you keep yourſelf diſengaged from either ſide, you will probably incur the reſentment of both: or, if you think to keep the good will of both by trimming, making each believe that you are on their ſide: beſides the baſeneſs of the practice, which muſt ſet a man at irreconcilable variance with himſelf, you muſt live in a perpetual fear of a diſcovery; and when you are detected, both will hate you worſe than they do each other.—Nay, in the

4*th* place, Should you give up the idea of obtaining univerſal favour, and content yourſelves with pleaſing a few; yet ſuch is the mutability of mens tempers, that your ſucceſs, even in this limited attempt, is very precarious. For how variable is the mind of man? ever ſhifting about, and alternately pleaſed and diſpleaſed with the ſame thing. When you have ſpent the beſt of your days in building upon this ſand, one blaſt ſhall throw down the laborious fabric in a moment. For difficult as it is to gain the favour of men, it is ſtill more difficult to preſerve it, or to regain it when it is loſt. Serve them as ſubmiſſively as you

you can, yet ſome croſs accident, ſome failure in gratifying their unreaſonable expectations, may ſuddenly turn all your honours into diſgrace, and leave you to complain, as Cardinal Wolſey did, 'Had I 'ſerved God as faithfully as man, he would 'not thus have forſaken me in my old age.' Nay, the perverſeneſs of many is ſo great, that they require contradictions ere they will be pleaſed. If John come faſting, they ſay, "he hath a devil:" if Chriſt come eating and drinking, they ſay, "Behold a man "gluttonous and a wine-bibber, a friend of "publicans and ſinners." If your judgment and practice be accommodated to your ſuperiors, ſome will call you ſupple and temporiſing: if it be otherwiſe, you will perhaps be reproached as diſcontented and ſeditious.

Thus, you ſee, that it is impoſſible to pleaſe all men, or even any conſiderable number of them at one time. Nor have we cauſe to wonder at this, when we conſider, that our bleſſed Saviour himſelf, notwithſtanding his perfect innocence and wiſdom, was more reviled than any man. Can you do

do more to deſerve the favour of men than Chriſt did? or can you expect to pleaſe thoſe who are diſpleaſed with God himſelf? For is not God daily diſpleaſing men in the courſe of his providence? and what is there that they quarrel with more bitterly than with his word? In fine, how can we expect to pleaſe any number of our fellow-creatures, when we cannot even pleaſe ourſelves conſtantly? And for the truth of this, I appeal to your own experience. You muſt be ſingular indeed, if you never fall out with yourſelves; I mean ſingularly inattentive (to give it no harſher name), for with the beſt I am ſure there is too often juſt cauſe for it. If then we are not able to preſerve our own eſteem at all times, how can we expect to preſerve the approbation of other men?

And now what is your judgment upon the whole? Is not man-pleaſing both a mean and fruitleſs attempt? Is it wiſe to have for your aim a thing ſo diſquieting, and ſo very precarious? Is it not by far the wiſer courſe to ſeek the approbation of God, who trieth your hearts, whom you

pleaſe moſt effectually when you purſue your own beſt intereſt? He is not variable in his affections, like men. Whom he loves, he loves unto the end. "Neither death, "nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor "powers, nor things preſent, nor things to "come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other "creature, ſhall be able to ſeparate us from "his love, which is in Chriſt Jeſus our "Lord."

Let me then addreſs you in the words of this ſame Apoſtle on another occaſion, "Ye are bought with a price, be not ye the "ſervants of men." Remember what our Lord ſaid to his diſciples while he was on earth; "One is your Maſter, even Chriſt." To him you owe all your homage: him only you are bound to pleaſe. And is not his favour a ſufficient portion? Did he ſuffer, and bleed, and die, that your hearts might be his, and will you refuſe him that which he hath ſo dearly bought? Where can you find a better Maſter, or one that you can be ſo certain of pleaſing, if you apply yourſelves to it? He requires no contradictory or impracticable ſervices. He hath

hath left you in no uncertainty about your duty. You need not ſay, "Wherewith "ſhall we come before the Lord? He hath "ſhewed thee, O man, what is good, and "what he requires of you," even in his written word, which he hath given to be "a lamp to your feet, and a light unto "your paths." He makes alſo the moſt gracious allowances for your infirmities. The willing mind is accepted by him; and although through weakneſs you fall ſhort of your own good purpoſes, yet he will ſay to you as he did to David, when he purpoſed to build him an houſe, "It was well that it "was in thine heart."

Who then would not apply himſelf to gain the approbation of ſuch a Maſter? This aim, well eſtabliſhed, would be a conſtant principle of holy obedience, and make us to abound in all thoſe fruits of righteouſneſs, which are through Chriſt to the praiſe and glory of God. Let this henceforth then be our ſole ambition, to approve ourſelves to him, by whoſe ſentence our final condition muſt be determined. And let it be our conſtant requeſt at the throne

of grace, that God by his almighty Spirit may exalt our ſouls above every mean and ſordid view, and enable us always ſo to ſpeak and act, " not as pleaſing men, but " God, who trieth our hearts."—Then the peace of God, which paſſeth all underſtanding, ſhall keep our hearts and minds through Chriſt Jeſus: and amidſt all the changing ſcenes of life, we ſhall have this for our rejoicing, even the teſtimony of a good conſcience, that in ſimplicity and godly ſincerity, not with fleſhly wiſdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our converſation in the world.

SERMON II.

ACTS xi. 23.

—And exhorted them all, that with purpoſe of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.

IT is not eaſy to conceive a more complete or amiable character than that which is given of Barnabas in the following verſe: "He was a good man, and full of the Holy "Ghoſt and of faith." And as a good man, out of the good treaſure of his heart, bringeth forth good things; ſo this faithful miniſter of Chriſt, who had been ſent by the church in Jeruſalem to viſit the new converts at Antioch, having ſeen thoſe real effects of the grace of God among them, of which he had formerly heard the agreeable report, was filled with joy; and, like a true "ſon of conſolation," which his name ſignifies, he "exhorted them all, that with "purpoſe of heart they would cleave unto

" the Lord."—My deſign in diſcourſing from theſe words, is,

1*ſt*, To explain the exhortation contained in them; 2*dly*, To enforce it by ſome motives and arguments; and, 3*dly*, To offer ſome directions which, through the bleſſing of God, may be uſeful to thoſe who are deſirous of complying with it.

I BEGIN with explaining the exhortation contained in the text.——And,

1*ſt*, It is obvious, that it ſuppoſeth thoſe to whom it is directed to be already entered upon a religious courſe of life. Barnabas addreſſed his diſcourſe to perſons who were real converts to Chriſtianity. It appears from the 21ſt and 22d verſes, that the tidings which had come to Jeruſalem concerning them, expreſsly affirmed, that a " great number had believed and turned " unto the Lord:" and Barnabas, ſoon after his arrival at Antioch, received full conviction that this report was true; for he " ſaw the grace of God, and was glad." The form of his exhortation indeed ſufficiently diſtinguiſheth the character of thoſe

to

to whom it was addreſſed; for ſuch as had never been joined to the Lord could not, with any propriety, be exhorted to cleave or to adhere to him. And as this exhortation, when addreſſed to us, ſuppoſeth that we have already choſen the ways of God; ſo it implies alſo, that our choice is the fruit of mature and ſolid conſideration. "This "purpoſe of heart," with which we are to "cleave unto the Lord," is not a blind and obſtinate bigotry, which puſheth men headlong in a way which they know not. Perſons of this character may have a fair ſhow in the time of proſperity: but when they are brought to the trial of adverſity, they will relinquiſh againſt reaſon what they began without it; and will turn as violent in oppoſing religion, as ever they ſeemed zealous in promoting it.—In the

2*d* place, The exhortation in my text requires the habitual exerciſe of all the graces of the Chriſtian life; the conſtant performance of every commanded duty. It is not enough that we draw near to the Lord on ſome ſtated occaſions, or have ſome tranſient flaſhes of devotion, like the Iſraelites

of old, concerning whom it is ſaid (Hoſea vi. 4.), that their goodneſs, like "the "morning cloud and early dew," appeared for a little, and then "vaniſhed" away. We muſt cleave to the Lord at all times; devotion muſt be the prevailing temper of our minds; and our habitual practice muſt correſpond to it. It muſt be our fixed deſign, and ſincere reſolution, to keep all God's commandments, at all times, and in all places and circumſtances.

Some there are who lay down reſolutions for the performance of *certain* duties, with a deſigned exception of others: Or perhaps they purpoſe to perform all the branches of duty for a particular ſeaſon, with a ſecret reſerve, that when that time ſhall be elapſed, they will then return to their former courſe of life. But all ſuch reſolutions are an abomination to God, as being hypocritical and inſincere; and plainly ſhow that the firſt ſtep in religion is not yet taken. For at the leaſt, it is eſſential to the character of a true Chriſtian, that there be a fixed and peremptory deſign to adhere to all duty, at all times. Grievous failures

and

and ſins there may be, even where there are ſuch honeſt and upright purpoſes; but if theſe are wanting, our profeſſion of religion muſt be altogether vain.—In the

3*d* place, The exhortation in my text requires that we make an open and honeſt profeſſion of our adherence to the Lord.—And I mention this, not only becauſe of the importance of the thing itſelf, but alſo on account of the ſhameful and pernicious failure even of ſome good people in this matter. Inſtead of confeſſing Chriſt boldly before men, they take as wide ſteps as their conſciences will allow them, to ſpeak the language, and to act the manners of a corrrupt generation, from the dread of appearing ſingular, or of incurring the charge of oſtentation or hypocriſy. But this method of concealing, or rather indeed of giving away a part of our religion, to ſecure the reputation of the reſt, is neither honeſt nor wiſe. Honeſt it cannot be; for it is juſt as fraudulent to impoſe upon men, by ſeeming worſe than we are, as by ſeeming better: And ſurely it is not wiſe; for if we reſolve to have the appearance of no more

religion

religon than corrupt minds will allow to be ſincere, I am afraid we muſt give it up altogether, and preſerve the opinion of our honeſty, by appearing to have no religion at all. Hypocriſy is a bad thing, not becauſe it wears the form of religion, but becauſe it wants the power of it: and the way to avoid hypocriſy, is not by doing leſs than the hypocrite, but by doing more and better. Our Saviour, who ſpent whole nights in prayer, cannot be ſuppoſed to condemn the Phariſees for praying long; but for making their prayers a cloak to cover their covetouſneſs and oppreſſion. He does not find fault with them for their outward beauty, but for their inward pollution and deformity. If holineſs be really within us, we have no occaſion to dread any harm from its appearing outwardly. It will at length overcome the malice of the world, and prove its divine original, both by its native luſtre, and its powerful influence upon thoſe who behold it.——Once more, in the

4*th* place, The exhortation in the text requires, that we perſevere in our adherence to

to the Lord to the end of our lives. It is not ſufficient that we begin well, and continue faithful for a while. We muſt hold on our way, and wax ſtronger and ſtronger as we proceed. We muſt not be wearied with the length of the way, but "lifting "up the hands that hang down, and "ſtrengthening the feeble knees," we muſt "run without wearying, and walk without "fainting, preſſing towards the mark, for "the prize of the high calling of God in "Chriſt Jeſus." We muſt not give up religious exerciſes, either becauſe of the frequent repetition of ſelf-denying duties, or of the bodily decay which old age brings on, or of the increaſing infirmities of the mind. We muſt not give over our work in deſpondency, becauſe of the ſlowneſs of our progreſs, the ſmallneſs of our ſucceſs, or the number and ſtrength of our enemies. —For all theſe diſcouragements will ſoon be over, "and in due time we ſhall reap, if "we faint not, a glorious and everlaſting re-"ward."—Having thus explained the exhortation in my text, I proceed now, in the

2*d* place, To enforce it by ſome motives and arguments.—Conſider then,

1*ſt*, That the ſame reaſons which at firſt determined you to chooſe the ways of God, are equally forcible for inciting you to perſevere in them to the end. Upon what grounds did ye embrace your religion at firſt? Why was it that ye ratified, when ye came to years, that profeſſion into which ye were baptized? Was it becauſe of the divine authority upon which your religion reſts? This reaſon ſurely ſtill holds, to make you adhere to it amidſt the ſtrongeſt temptations: for divine authority is always to be obeyed, whatever difficulties lie in the way; nay, though the commands of the higheſt powers on earth ſhould interfere with it. Was it concern for your eternal ſalvation, and a conviction that "there is "no other name under heaven, given "among men, whereby you can be ſaved, "but the name of Chriſt?" and does not this reaſon bind you as much to cleave to the Lord, as to come to him at firſt? "The "Lord is with you while ye be with him, "and if ye ſeek him he will be found of you;

"but

" but if ye forſake him, he will forſake you." " He that endureth to the end," ſaith Chriſt, " ſhall be ſaved."—" But if any man draw " back, my ſoul ſhall have no pleaſure in " him." Nay, the caſe of apoſtates is repreſented every where in Scripture as inconceivably more dreadful than that of any other ſinners. Once more, did you enter upon a religious courſe of life, becauſe your conſciences would not ſuffer you to be at peace till you had done ſo? This reaſon alſo binds you to perſevere as you have begun; for the more faithfully you cleave to the Lord, the more ſteadfaſtly you reſiſt temptation, the greater peace and tranquillity you will have in your own minds. Nay, the obſtacles which now make your progreſs difficult and painful, will gradually diſappear, and at length you ſhall find, that " wiſdom's ways are ways of plea- " ſantneſs, and that all her paths are peace." In a word, whatever good reaſon we had to ſet out in the Chriſtian courſe, the ſame reaſon will hold for our perſeverance in it. If we began it from bad or from worldly motives, our religion is but an empty profeſſion, with-

without any reality. In this caſe we are not yet Chriſtians; and therefore the exhortation in the text doth not belong to us.—Conſider, in the

2*d* place, That all the bribes which can be offered, in order to ſeduce you from your adherence to the Lord, are vain, precarious, and unſatisfying. How often have men "made ſhipwreck of faith and of a "good conſcience," for a mere ſhadow of expectation which was never realized to them? But though you ſhould obtain all that this world can preſent to you, yet how bitter is that advantage which is purchaſed at the expence of inward peace and tranquillity? Nay, how vain and precarious are the enjoyments of this world at the beſt? "Riches often make to themſelves wings "and flee away;" and then they leave the perſon much more unhappy than they found him, under the dominion of inflamed appetites, without the proper objects to ſatisfy them. The joy of the wicked is like the "crackling of thorns under a pot;" vain whilſt it laſts, and ſoon at an end. Balaam loved the reward of unrighteouſneſs, and

and he obtained it; but what did he reap from it at laſt? he returned to his own country loaded with riches, but all his enjoyments were embittered by "an evil con-"ſcience," and he himſelf was ſoon after brought to an untimely end by the victorious arms of the Iſraelites. So deceitful are the offers with which this world would ſeduce you from your adherence to the Lord. But in cleaving to the Lord, you can never be diſappointed in your expectations; for he hath ſaid, "I will never leave "thee nor forſake thee."—Conſider, in the

3*d* place, What obligations you lie under to this Lord to whom you are exhorted in the text, to "cleave with purpoſe of heart." He it was that befriended you in your greateſt neceſſity, and that brought ſalvation with his own arm, when there was no other eye to pity you, nor any other hand that could help you. Think on the greatneſs of the love of Chriſt, and on the coſtly proofs he gave of it, in condeſcending to become a man, and "a man of ſorrows," and at laſt to die under the bittereſt agonies, for the redemption of your ſouls; and then

let

let gratitude ſuggeſt to you what returns may reaſonably be expected from creatures ſo infinitely indebted to him as you have been. Did the Lord Jeſus, without any importunity from us, and even contrary to our deſires, perſiſt in his gracious deſign of ſaving us, till he could ſay upon the croſs, "It is finiſhed?" and ſhall not we perſevere with ſtedfaſtneſs in our duty and allegiance to him? Surely, if his heart clave to us, when we had nothing to merit or invite his love, much more ſhould our hearts cleave to Him, who is not only infinitely amiable in himſelf, but, which is ſtill more intereſting, infinitely kind and gracious to us. Once more, in the

4*th* place, Conſider that this duty, although difficult, is by no means impracticable. Thouſands of our brethren, all men of like paſſions with ourſelves, have perſevered to the end in cleaving to the Lord, and are now enjoying the glorious reward of their ſtedfaſt adherence to him. All neceſſary aid is provided for you, and ready to be conveyed to you as often as you ſhall aſk it. For "God is faithful, who will not

"ſuffer

" ſuffer you to be tempted above what ye " are able to bear, but will with the tempta- " tion alſo make a way to eſcape, that ye may " be able to bear it." Indeed, had you no other ſtrength but your own, to exhort you to " cleave unto the Lord," would only be to mock your miſery. But help is laid for you on One who is mighty, and is no leſs willing than powerful to ſupport you under all your trials. He can perfect ſtrength in your weakneſs; and whilſt you are ſtretching forth your feeble arms to embrace him, he will incloſe you in the arms of his Omnipotence, and work in you effectually " both to will and to do of his " good pleaſure."

Having thus explained the exhortation in the text, and endeavoured to enforce it by ſome motives and arguments, I proceed now, as was propoſed, in the

Third place, To offer ſome directions, which, through the bleſſing of God, may be uſeful to thoſe who are deſirous of complying with this exhortation.—And, in the

1*ſt* place, Labour to have your minds as

richly furniſhed as poſſible with true Chriſtian knowledge. Study the nature and the reaſons of the religion which you profeſs, that you may be able to confute gainſayers, or at leaſt to withſtand their attempts to ſeduce and pervert you. Knowledge muſt lie at the root of our ſtedfaſtneſs; otherwiſe, let the cauſe in which we are engaged be ever ſo good, our adherence to it is nothing elſe than obſtinacy of temper; which can neither pleaſe God, nor bring any real advantage to ourſelves. In ſuch a caſe, if a man is in the right, it is merely by accident: he might as readily have been in the wrong; and it is very poſſible, nay extremely likely, that ſome new "wind of "doctrine" may ſeduce him, and that he may become as violent in his enmity to the goſpel, as he was once warm in ſupporting it. It is true, indeed, there may be a great deal of ſound knowledge in the head, where there is no real grace in the heart. A foreigner may learn to ſpeak the language of Zion ſo well, that it will be difficult to diſtinguiſh him from one who is "an Iſraelite "indeed." But, on the other hand, it is ab-

abſolutely certain, that grace cannot conſiſt with groſs ignorance: For the firſt operation of the Spirit of God is to open mens eyes, and to turn them from darkneſs unto light: Conſequently, where there is no light, it muſt be concluded that there is no grace. Some exceptions there may be; and there have been examples of perſons, in whoſe temper and practice the lineaments of the New Creature could plainly be diſcerned, who, by reaſon of their natural dulneſs, were incapable of acquiring any diſtinct knowledge of the principles of religion, or at leaſt of expreſſing what they knew to the ſatisfaction of others. This rule of judging muſt not therefore be extended to thoſe whoſe underſtandings are viſibly weak, and unapt to receive or to retain inſtruction: for out of the mouths of ſuch babes and ſucklings, God may, and often doth, perfect his praiſe. But when men are quick enough to learn other things, and yet remain ignorant of the great truths of Chriſtianity; when they diſcover no anxiety, nor uſe any proper endeavours, to acquire the knowledge of them; this voluntary ignorance,

whatever they may pretend, is a plain proof of an unconverted ſtate. Let none who acknowledge and lament their ignorance, and who uſe the means to have it removed, be diſcouraged at what I have now ſaid; for they are not the perſons concerning whom I ſpeak. But if I could meditate a reproof of more than ordinary ſharpneſs, I would addreſs it to thoſe who, amidſt Bibles and Sermons, and other excellent helps for their ſpiritual improvement, remain ſtupidly ignorant of the moſt eſſential points of Chriſtianity, without any ſhame and concern. And, alas! what numbers of this deſcription are to be found among us? How many claim the peculiar privileges of Chriſtians, who know little more of Chriſtianity than the name? Nay, is it not to be feared, that many who partake of the holy ſacrament of the Lord's Supper, are ſo groſsly ignorant of the nature of that ordinance, that, with reſpect to them, the communion-table itſelf may bear the ſame inſcription which Paul found upon the altar at Athens, "To the "unknown God." This, my brethren, yields us a very melancholy proſpect: for ſurely

ſurely they are not likely to prove ſtedfaſt Chriſtians, who know ſo little of Chriſtianity, that it is hard to find out upon what grounds they are Chriſtians at all. I would therefore recommend it to you, with the greateſt earneſtneſs, to ſtudy the principles of that religion which you profeſs. Spare no pains that may be neceſſary to get a thorough acquaintance with them, and then you will be in leſs danger of forſaking them when an hour of trial comes. "They that "know their God," ſaid the angel to Daniel, "ſhall be ſtrong and do exploits." "For underſtanding ſhall keep thee," ſaith Solomon, "to deliver thee from the way of "the evil man, from the man that ſpeaketh "froward things, who leave the paths of "uprightneſs, to walk in the ways of darkneſs." But,

2*dly*, Beſides the ſpeculative knowledge of divine truths, you muſt alſo labour to acquire an inward experience and reliſh of them. Did we truly feel their influence upon our own hearts, it would ſerve in place of a thouſand arguments to prove their divine original. He would be a cunning

ſophiſter indeed, who could perſuade a man that honey was bitter, whilſt he taſted the ſweetneſs of it in his mouth. It is an experimental conviction of the truth of the goſpel, which fortifies the true Chriſtian againſt all the arts of ſeducers. He hath a witneſs within himſelf, and can bring a proof from his own heart, both of the truth and excellence of the religion which he profeſſeth. It was a ſtubborn queſtion which Athanaſius put to the heathens of his time, who denied the reſurrection of Chriſt. 'If Chriſt 'be not alive,' ſaid he, 'how doth he yet 'deſtroy your idols, and caſt out devils, and 'convert and ſubdue the world to himſelf? 'Are theſe the works of a dead man?' In like manner can the ſanctified ſoul ſay, 'Have I felt Chriſt opening my blind eyes, 'binding the ſtrong man, and caſting him 'out? Have I felt him ſtamping his image 'upon my ſoul, and bringing me with 'boldneſs into the preſence of that God 'whom I had offended? And after this, 'ſhall I doubt whether there be a Chriſt, 'or whether this Chriſt be able to ſave me?' Thus can the true believer, who hath felt the

the power of Chriſtianity, bring unanſwerable arguments for its truth from his own experience: Arguments which neither the temptations of Satan, nor the cavils of wicked men, will be able to overthrow.

3dly, If you would cleave with ſtedfaſtneſs unto the Lord, attend conſtantly to the inward frame and temper of your hearts. Make conſcience of watching over your moſt ſecret thoughts. Suffer them not to wander without controul, or to ſpend their ſtrength upon things which cannot profit you; otherwiſe you will open a wide door to the enemy, and even furniſh him with weapons which he will not fail to improve againſt you. I am afraid the importance of this direction is too little conſidered by the generality of Chriſtians. We commonly think ourſelves ſecure when out of the way of external temptations, and ſuffer our minds to roam at large wherever fancy preſents an amuſing object. Whereas we ought to conſider, that whatever inflames our paſſions, or gives them an improper direction, is equally hurtful to the ſoul, whether the cauſe be real or imaginary. Nay, I am per-

ſuaded, that the tempter doth often make greater havock in our hearts, by mingling his poiſon with the ſuggeſtions of our own minds, than by all his other methods of temptation. If we would keep our hearts indeed, we muſt watch their motions as carefully when we are alone, as when we are abroad and in the midſt of danger. The preſence of God ſhould conſtantly overawe our moſt ſecret thoughts, and have equal influence on us in our retirement, as when we act in the open view of the world.

——A

4th direction I ſhall give you in the words of the Apoſtle Paul, (Rom. xi. 20.) "Be "not high-minded, but fear." Remember what our bleſſed Lord ſaid to his diſciples, "Without me ye can do nothing." Nothing is more offenſive to God than pride. When our hearts begin to ſwell with a high opinion of our own ſtrength, he is provoked to with-hold his grace from us; becauſe all that is poured into the proud ſoul runs over in ſelf-applauſe, and ſo is like water ſpilt on a rock, with reſpect to any good that it doth to a man himſelf, or any glory which

it

it brings to God. The proud heart, like the towering cliff, is never fruitful. If we would in due time be exalted, we muſt firſt humble ourſelves under the mighty hand of God. This is the way to obtain freſh ſupplies of his ſupporting grace. "Happy is "the man," ſaith Solomon, "who feareth "always." A holy diffidence of ourſelves is the true temper of a Chriſtian, and will both ſerve to keep us out of the way of temptation, and teach us to act with the caution of men who perceive their danger, and are careful to ſhun it.

5thly, Avoid, as much as poſſible, the fellowſhip of wicked men. This is an advice which I am inclined to repeat as often as I can find occaſion for it; and indeed it is ſcarcely poſſible to inſiſt upon it as much as its importance deſerves. A man who is careleſs of his company, diſregards his own ſoul. If therefore you would cleave unto the Lord, imitate the holy Pſalmiſt, and give charge to evil-doers to depart from you. Let the ſaints, the excellent ones of the earth, be the men of your counſel. We ſtand much in need of all the aſſiſtance which we

we can derive from our fellow Chriſtians. "Wo to him that is alone when he falleth," ſaith the wiſe man, "for he hath not ano-"ther to help him up." Whereas, when Chriſtians join together in holy communion, like trees planted in a thicket, they ſhelter and defend one another. They have boldneſs to face their adverſaries, as well as ſtrength to baffle their attempts to ſeduce them. "Let us then exhort one another "daily, leſt any of us be hardened through "the deceitfulneſs of ſin." Like brethren, let us dwell together in love and unity, having all our ſpiritual goods in common, being "ready to diſtribute, willing to commu-"nicate," according to the meaſure of gifts and graces which it hath pleaſed our heavenly Father to beſtow on us.—In the

6*th* and *laſt* place, If we would obey the exhortation in the text, we muſt beware of neglecting the inſtrumental duties of religion. Let us carefully read the Holy Scriptures, which God, in mercy, hath given us to be a "lamp to our feet, and a light unto "our path."—"The law of the Lord is per-"fect, converting the ſoul: the teſtimony

"of

" of the Lord is ſure, making wiſe the ſim-
" ple."——To reading you muſt join the hearing of the word preached; that powerful ordinance which God hath ſo remarkably countenanced in all ages of the church, and made effectual by his bleſſing, both for the converſion of ſinners, and for the eſtabliſhment of his own people. Under this head I would particularly recommend to you a devout attendance upon the holy ſacrament of the Lord's Supper, which is ſo peculiarly calculated to ſtrenghthen our faith, and to build us up in holineſs and comfort, unto eternal life. This hath been found, in the experience of all the ſaints, to be a moſt bleſſed inſtitution, which hath in every age enabled men to hold on their way with alacrity and joy, and in every ſituation hath aſſiſted them to renew their ſtrength. To all this we muſt add conſtant and fervent prayer to God. By this we maintain correſpondence with the " Father
" of lights, from whom cometh down every
" good and perfect gift." Prayer is the meſſenger which he hath appointed for conveying to us help in every time of need.

He

He hath promiſed his Spirit to them who aſk it. Let us "aſk and receive, that our "joy may be full."

Thus, my brethren, I have ſuggeſted to you a few plain directions, which, through the bleſſing of God, may be of uſe to aſſiſt you in maintaining that firm adherence to the Lord, which my text recommends. All that now remains is, that I intreat you to reduce them to practice. And what motive can I repreſent to you ſo powerful as the conſideration, that "to them who, by a "patient continuance in well-doing, ſeek "for glory, honour, and immortality, God "will render eternal life." "To him that "overcometh," ſaith Chriſt, "will I grant to "ſit down with me on my throne, even as "I alſo overcame, and am ſet down with "my Father on his throne." The time draweth near, when you ſhall be placed beyond the reach of temptation, when your warfare ſhall be accompliſhed, and your ſtruggles at an end; and who would not ſuſtain a ſhort, though it were a ſharp, conflict, that he might obtain a triumphant victory? Some of us perhaps have but a

few

few more efforts to make, and a few more aſſaults to ſuſtain, before Chriſt ſhall call us home to receive the enriching reward,—a reward not of debt but of grace; even that exceeding and eternal weight of glory, with which our light and momentary afflictions are not worthy to be compared. Let us all then be perſuaded, "with purpoſe of heart "to cleave unto the Lord." Let us count all things but loſs, that we may win Chriſt, and be found in him, not having our own righteouſneſs, but that everlaſting righteouſneſs which he hath prepared for them who "cleave to him." Let us go from this place, ſaying as Peter did, only with more humility, "Though all men ſhould forſake "thee, yet will not we." And "now unto "him that is able to keep you from falling, "and to preſent you faultleſs before the pre- "ſence of his glory with exceeding joy: "To the only wiſe God our Saviour, be "glory and majeſty, dominion and power, "both now and ever. *Amen.*

SER-

SERMON III.

MICAH vi. 3.

O my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? Teſtify againſt me.

IT is impoſſible to predict what impreſſion the ſame truth will make upon the different minds of men. That word, which will pierce one man, to the "dividing aſun-" der of the ſoul and ſpirit," may have no edge at all when addreſſed to another. But, were I to judge from my own feelings, I ſhould think, that all the terrors of God could not more effectually overawe the heart of a ſinner, than the paſſage of Scripture which I have now read. It ſtrikes my ear like the laſt ſound of God's mercy. Doth the Almighty command and threaten? I fear and tremble: yet I have ſtill ſome expectation, that his compaſſion may interpoſe in my

my behalf.—But, doth he put off his terrible Majeſty, and, inſtead of vindicating the authority, condeſcend to plead the reaſonableneſs of his law? then I am ſure, that his forbearance is almoſt exhauſted, and that my day of grace is drawing near to an end. For as he neither wants power to puniſh, nor provocation to juſtify the puniſhment he might inflict, his deſign in ſtooping ſo low, can only be to render my condemnation conſiſtent with the utmoſt extent of his mercy.——In the words of the text, the Supreme Lord of heaven and earth, appeals to ſinners themſelves, for the mildneſs and equity of his government; and challengeth them to produce one inſtance of undue ſeverity towards them, or the leaſt ſhadow of excuſe for their undutiful behaviour towards him. "O my people, what have I "done unto thee? and wherein have I wea-"ried thee? Teſtify againſt me." And doth the infinitely wiſe God condeſcend to be tried at the bar of human reaſon? Can it then be ſuppoſed, that his cauſe is doubtful, or that he runs the leaſt hazard of being caſt in judgment? Have we not reaſon

to

to conclude, that the evidence of his goodneſs muſt be clear and irreſiſtible, when he offers it to trial before the moſt partial tribunal, and ſubmits his vindication to thoſe very perſons who cannot juſtify him without condemning themſelves?

But as ſinners are naturally diſpoſed to ſhun the light, and to turn away their eyes from every thing that hath a tendency to humble and abaſe them; it may be of uſe to bring this cauſe to a fair and open trial: Which, through divine aſſiſtance, I propoſe to do,

1ſt, By giving you a direct proof of the goodneſs of God, and of his tender concern for the welfare of his creatures.

2dly, By examining ſome of the moſt plauſible objections which are urged againſt the mildneſs and equity of the divine adminiſtration.

I will then conclude with a practical improvement of the ſubject.

I BEGIN with giving you a direct proof of the goodneſs of God, and of his tender

concern for the welfare of his creatures. This appears, in the

1*ſt* place, From the unwearied patience which he exerciſeth towards tranſgreſſors. How eaſily could he arreſt them in the midſt of their mad career, and hurry them to judgment with all their provocations on their heads? Might not God have ſeized thee, O ſinner, in the very act of ſin, with a curſe or a lie in thy mouth, and have ſtopped that breath with which thou waſt inſulting his name and his laws? How often might he have ſummoned thee to his dread tribunal in a fit of drunkenneſs; and made thee ſober in that place of torment where there is not a drop of water to cool the thirſty tongue? Ah! how eaſy a matter is it for the Almighty to bring down the proudeſt of his foes? to ſilence the profane injurious railer? to bind the hands of the oppreſſors, and to make them know that they are but worms? We read of one angel deſtroying, in one night, an hundred and fourſcore and five thouſand Aſſyrians: and myriads of angels ſtand continually before his throne ready to execute what-

ever he commands. He is the Lord of Hoſts, "who doth according to his will in "the army of heaven, and among the in- "habitants of the earth."—How eaſily can he throw thee into a bed of languiſhing? and waſte thy ſtrength under ſuch a pining ſickneſs, or racking pain, as to make thee cry for mercy to him whom thou blaſphemeſt, and even beg the prayers of thoſe whom thou waſt wont to ſcorn?——But God hath as yet done none of theſe things. By his merciful viſitation, he preſerves thee in the land of the living, and in the land of hope. He ſupplies all thy wants, and loads thee with unceaſing benefits. He gave thee that breath which thou haſt breathed out againſt him, and every moment of that time whicch thou haſt ſquandered away in idleneſs, ſenſuality, and the works of the fleſh. Why doth he yet wait to be gracious, if he were not tenderly ſolicitous for thy welfare? Surely his ſparing mercy muſt be intended to bring thee back to himſelf: He reſtrains his wrath, that his goodneſs, like coals of fire, may melt down thine impenitence, and thy hardneſs of heart: "The

"Lord

" Lord is not ſlack concerning his promiſe, " (as ſome men count ſlackneſs,) but is " long-ſuffering to us-ward, not willing " that any ſhould periſh, but that all ſhould " come to repentance." But,

2dly, The goodneſs of God, and his tender concern for the welfare of his creatures, is ſtill more illuſtriouſly diſplayed in the ſufferings and death of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, whom God ſent into the world for this very " end, that whoſoever believeth on him, " might not periſh, but have everlaſting life." There we ſee a proof, the moſt ſtrong and convincing that God himſelf could give, of his having " no pleaſure in the death of " the wicked, but rather that he ſhould re- " turn from his way, and live." Would he have ranſomed ſinners at ſo coſtly a price as the blood of his only begotten Son? would he have aſtoniſhed angels with ſo wonderful an act of condeſcenſion, as to ſend Him who was the " brightneſs of his " glory, and the expreſs image of his per- " ſon," to aſſume the likeneſs of ſinful fleſh, to ſubmit to the infirmities of our low nature, nay, to the ignominy and pain of the

croſs? had not our everlaſting welfare been an object of his tendereſt concern. This ſurely, if duly conſidered, muſt remove all ſuſpicions of his goodneſs, and deſtroy the jealouſies even of the moſt diſtruſtful mind. Behold Chriſt weeping over the impending fate of Jeruſalem, and bemoaning the hardneſs of heart of thoſe who attended his miniſtry; view him in his agony, and in his conflict with the powers of darkneſs; hear him on the croſs praying for his enemies—and then ſuppoſe, if you are able, that your ruin can be pleaſing to him who hath done ſo much to prevent it. But, in the

3*d* place, The various means which God employs for reclaiming men from their ways of folly and vice, afford another proof of his goodneſs, and of his tender concern for their welfare. He is not only the Author of the gracious plan of our redemption, but he hath likewiſe ſet before us the moſt powerful motives to perſuade us to embrace his offered favour, and to comply with his deſigns of mercy. Every conſideration, which can be ſuppoſed to work, either

ther on our hopes or our fears, is ſet before us in the moſt ſtriking light. The veil is removed from the inviſible world; the joys of glorified ſaints, and the torments of deſpairing ſinners, are made the ſubject of a clear revelation. How affectionately doth he invite men to turn unto him and live? "Come now, and let us reaſon toge-" ther, ſaith the Lord: though your ſins be " as ſcarlet, they ſhall be as white as ſnow; " though they be red like crimſon, they " ſhall be white as wool." "Wherefore do ye " ſpend money for that which is not bread? " and your labour for that which ſatisfieth " not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye " that which is good, and let your ſoul de-" light itſelf in fatneſs. Incline your ear, and " come unto me; hear, and your ſoul ſhall " live." Even the threatenings of God are not ſo much the thunderings of his juſtice, as the loud rhetoric of his mercy. He ſhakes the rod over us, that, by a timely ſubmiſſion, we may avert the ſtroke. And when all the methods uſed to reclaim a ſinner have proved ineffectual, with what reluctance doth he at laſt execute his threaten-

ed vengeance? "How ſhall I give thee up, "Ephraim? how ſhall I deliver thee, Iſ- "rael? how ſhall I make thee as Admah? "how ſhall I ſet thee as Zeboim? Mine "heart is turned within me, my repentings "are kindled together." Nay, after the fierceneſs of his anger hath conſumed the tranſgreſſors, what regret doth he expreſs, that they ſhould have extorted from him their own puniſhment? "O that my peo- "ple had hearkened unto me, and Iſrael "had walked in my ways!" He utters theſe words, as it were with a ſigh, lamenting the folly and perverſeneſs which had compelled him to ſuch meaſures of ſeverity againſt them: Not that God is influenced by any human paſſions; but becauſe he could not otherwiſe communicate, in a manner intelligible to us, the deep concern which he takes in our welfare.

Nor are theſe mere expreſſions of kindneſs, which are unaccompanied with deeds to prove their ſincerity, and to render them effectual: he hath inſtituted an order of men to carry the glad tidings of ſalvation to every corner of the earth; to beſeech ſinners,

ners, in his name, to lay aſide their enmity to him, which can only hurt themſelves, and to return to that Almighty Being, who, though he ſtands in no need of them, is moſt ſincerely willing to receive them into his favour, and to beſtow on them everlaſting happineſs. "We are ambaſſadors for "Chriſt, as though God did beſeech you by "us; we pray you in Chriſt's ſtead, be ye "reconciled to God." We are commanded to "preach the word,—to be inſtant in ſea-"ſon and out of ſeaſon,—in meekneſs in-"ſtructing thoſe that oppoſe themſelves, if "God peradventure will give them repent-"ance to the acknowledging of the truth." And to excite us to be diligent and faithful in the exerciſe of this office, he hath aſſured us, that "when the chief Shepherd "ſhall appear, we ſhall receive a crown of "glory that fadeth not away."

Is not this then an unanſwerable proof that God hath no pleaſure in the death of ſinners? What ſtronger evidence of it could he give, than to ſend to them ſo many meſſengers, to beſeech them in his name to turn and live? to employ on this kind

errand, creatures of the ſame nature with themſelves, ſubject to the ſame paſſions, expoſed to the ſame temptations, who have the advantage of familiar intercourſe with them, and who are always at hand, to help, to comfort, and to quicken them? Nay, he hath made it the duty of every man, in his place, to do all that he can for the converſion of others. "Exhort one another "daily," ſaith an Apoſtle, "while it is call-"ed to-day, leſt any of you be hardened "through the deceitfulneſs of ſin." "Bre-"thren," ſaith the Apoſtle James, "if any "of you do err from the truth, and one "convert him; let him know, that he which "converteth a ſinner from the error of his "way, ſhall ſave a ſoul from death, and "ſhall hide a multitude of ſins." Nor ſhall this labour of love paſs without a reward; for "they that be wiſe ſhall ſhine as the bright-"neſs of the firmament, and they that turn "many to righteouſneſs, as the ſtars for "ever and ever." But that nothing may be wanting to beget in us the firmeſt perſuaſion of the goodneſs of God, and of his tender

tender concern for the welfare of his creatures, let it be obſerved, in the

4*th* and *laſt* place on this head, That he hath ſelected ſome of the moſt notorious offenders in the different ages of the world, to be monuments of the riches of his grace; that the chief of ſinners might be encouraged to apply to him for pardon and eternal life; who, without ſuch examples, might have been ready to look on their caſe as deſperate. How many, who were once ſunk into the loweſt degeneracy, are now in heaven, ſinging that grateful triumphant ſong, " Unto him that loved us, and waſhed " us from our ſins in his own blood, and " hath made us kings and prieſts unto God " and his Father; to him be glory and do- " minion for ever and ever. Amen?" There is Menaſſeh, one who uſed enchantment and divination, and who deluged the ſtreets of Jeruſalem with innocent blood. There is Saul, once a blaſphemer and a perſecutor, who thus teſtifies of himſelf, " For this " cauſe I obtained mercy, that in me firſt " Jeſus Chriſt might ſhew forth all long- " ſuffering, for a pattern to them which " ſhould

" ſhould hereafter believe on him to life " everlaſting." There are ſome of thoſe Corinthians who were once the ſcandal of their country, and the reproach of human nature (1 Cor. vi. 11.); but being " waſhed, " and ſanctified, and juſtified in the name " of the Lord Jeſus, and by the Spirit of " our God," are now walking in white, following the Lamb whitherſoever he goeth, and contemplating with wonder and joy the extent of that love " which paſſeth " knowledge." Nay, there are ſome of the murderers of the Lord of glory, three thouſand of whom were converted by the miniſtry of Peter in one day: and now they are rejoicing in the preſence of that Jeſus whom they crucified, and aſcribing their eternal ſalvation to that blood which was ſhed by their own wicked hands. In one word, with ſuch examples as theſe the Scripture is repleniſhed; and God every where appears like the father in the parable, ſtretching forth his arms to the prodigal ſon, and delighting to diſplay the riches of his grace.

Such then are the poſitive and direct evi-

dences

dences of the goodneſs of God, and of his tender concern for the welfare of his creatures.——I proceed now, as was propoſed, in the

Second place, To examine ſome of the moſt plauſible objections which are urged againſt the mildneſs and equity of the divine adminiſtration.

Say, then, O ſinner, wherein hath God dealt rigorouſly with you? and what cauſe he hath ever given you to charge him with ſeverity? "Teſtify againſt him," in what reſpect he hath ſhown himſelf an enemy to your happineſs?

1ſt, Is it the holineſs and perfection of his law that you complain of? Hath he given you too accurate a rule of life? and laid too many reſtraints upon your natural inclinations?—This complaint is both fooliſh and ungrateful. The law of God requires nothing, but what tends to make us happy; nor doth it forbid any thing which would not be productive of our miſery. The very deſign of it is to deſcribe and recommend that holineſs, "without which no man "ſhall

"ſhall ſee the Lord:" So that the perfection of it is no leſs a proof of the goodneſs, than of the wiſdom of its Author. Were holineſs, indeed, unneceſſary, or were vice the road to happineſs, the objection would in that caſe be juſt. But as there is an inſeparable connection between ſin and miſery; and as holineſs is indiſpenſably neceſſary, to qualify us for the enjoyment of God; it muſt follow, that to find fault with the purity of his law, is to find fault with it for being too much adapted to our intereſt. It is not therefore leſs abſurd, than if a ſcholar were to blame his maſter for the excellence of the example which he had given him to copy; or than if a traveller ſhould quarrel with his guide, for directing him with too much exactneſs in the way.

2*dly*, Do you complain of the threatenings with which this law is enforced? Doth God appear ſevere, becauſe he hath ſaid, that the wicked muſt either turn from his evil ways or die? This complaint is ſurely as unreaſonable as the former. Shall God be reckoned an enemy to your happineſs, becauſe he uſeth the moſt effectual means to promote it? Can he be ſuppoſed to deſire

your misery, who so earnestly warns you of your danger, and who so warmly pleads with you to avoid it? Should one find you running towards a precipice in your sleep, would you blame him for stopping you, though perhaps he might interrupt you in the enjoyment of some pleasant dream? Were you ready to sink in deep water, would you not reckon that man your friend, who should save you from drowning, even though he dragged you out by the hair of the head?—This is the very purpose, or the friendly design of all God's threatenings. He publisheth them, that they may never be executed; he makes them terrible, that the terror of them may persuade men to avoid them. Had God published a law, and concealed the importance of it, with respect to our happiness or misery; would not the objection, in that case, against his goodness, have been far more just and rational?—If his threatenings prevail with you, never shall you have cause to complain of their severity: and if they do not prevail, with what face can you allege, that the penalties are too high, when, at the same time, your own

own practice confutes you, and proves, that they are not high enough to reſtrain you from incurring them. But,

3*dly*, Perhaps your objection doth not lie ſo much againſt the publication of the threatenings, as againſt the final execution of them. You ſee their uſe to overawe mankind in this world; but you think that it would be cruel in God to inflict them in good earneſt, and to puniſh men eternally, for ſins committed during the ſhort period of their abode on earth. Now, in anſwer to this, let me only aſk you, whether thoſe threatenings would be of any uſe at all, if the ſinner knew that they would never be executed, or even if the execution of them were in the leaſt degree doubtful? He who can make ſubjects believe that their governor means only to frighten them with his penalties, will eaſily make his laws of no effect, and ſet offenders looſe from every reſtraint. The belief of the execution is therefore abſolutely neceſſary to the efficacy of the law, which otherwiſe could only be an engine to work upon fools. And if it be neceſſary in all caſes that ſubjects ſhould

believe that the law will be executed, then it follows, in the preſent caſe, that the threatenings of God ſhall certainly be executed at laſt. For God cannot lie, nor make it the duty of mankind to believe a lie. He has no need of ſuch baſe means to keep the world in order. If the penalties, as they are deſcribed in the law, be conſiſtent with the goodneſs of God, the inflicting of them at laſt cannot in reaſon be ſuſtained as an objection againſt it.——Say then, O ſinner, what farther haſt thou to allege againſt God? The appeal is made to you in the text, and a challenge given to you to bring forth all your objections againſt his laws and government.—Do you blame him, in the

4th place, For the temptations you meet with in the world, and thoſe circumſtances of danger with which you are ſurrounded? Let us conſider a little the juſtice of this complaint. The ſtrongeſt temptations, you muſt allow, have no compulſive efficacy; all that they can do, is to ſolicit and entice us: And are there not addreſſed to us far more weighty arguments and ſolicitations to

to forſake ſin, and to walk in the paths of wiſdom? If we cannot reſiſt the devil and the fleſh, how can we refuſe what God demands, who pleadeth with us by infinitely ſtronger motives than they can preſent to us? for he ſets before us the endleſs joys, or the endleſs torments, of a future ſtate of exiſtence. Doth not the undefiled inheritance of the ſaints in light, infinitely tranſcend all that earth or ſenſe can promiſe us? and yet ſhall we pretend to juſtify ourſelves, when, contrary to all reaſon, we prefer the pleaſures of ſin, which are but for a moment, to the eternal happineſs and glory of the world to come?——Once more, in the

5th place, Do you object that you cannot reclaim or convert yourſelves? that man can do nothing towards his converſion, unleſs he ſhall receive power from on high? that therefore you are excuſable until God ſhall impart his aſſiſtance? and that if you periſh, it is not your fault?

My brethren, we muſt not ſpeak falſely even for God; nor ſuppreſs or diſguiſe the doctrines of his word, however they may

may be abuſed by carnal and obſtinate ſinners.

It is true, that man, in his natural ſtate, cannot do any thing that is ſpiritually good: for "they that are in the fleſh cannot pleaſe God." It is equally true, that God is a debtor to no man, but is the free diſpoſer of his own grace, giving it when and to whomſoever he pleaſeth. But it is no leſs true, that there are certain means of his appointment, in the uſe of which alone we have reaſon to expect his aid; and he who doth not improve theſe faithfully, complains with a very bad grace, at leaſt, and is juſtly chargeable with his own damnation.

You cannot convert yourſelves;—but cannot you forbear to curſe and blaſpheme the name of God? Cannot you reſtrain yourſelves when your nature is duly refreſhed with meat and drink? Cannot you keep at a diſtance from evil company, and avoid many occaſions of ſinning, and temptations to ſin? It is certainly in your power to perform many of the external acts of religious worſhip. You can go to church, if

you are ſo diſpoſed, as eaſily as you can ſtay at home, or ride abroad for your amuſement. You can go to your cloſet as eaſily as to the tavern. What hinders you to read your bible, as well as any other book? to meditate on what it contains, and on its vaſt importance to your everlaſting intereſt?

Have you then done theſe things, or have you not done them? Have you avoided the tempting occaſions of evil? Have you uſed the means of grace, and attended ſeriouſly upon the ordinances of God's worſhip? ——If you have neglected to employ the powers you poſſeſs, whom can you blame for it, that you have not obtained more extenſive powers? God will make you one day to know, that it was not he who carried you to the haunts of riot, intemperance, and lewdneſs; that it was not he who tempted you to ſwear profanely, or to rail at goodneſs, or to quarrel with the Word that ſhould have ſaved you; but that all this was owing to the voluntary and obſtinate wickedneſs of your own corrupt hearts. And, whatever excuſes ſinners may now feign to themſelves, they muſt all ſtand ſpeechleſs at laſt. None ſhall be able to plead,

plead, 'Lord, I applied to thee for converting grace, but it was refuſed me.' No, God will be clear when he judgeth; and every mouth ſhall be ſtopped in that day when he paſſeth ſentence on an aſſembled world.

Thus have I examined and endeavoured to refute ſome of the moſt plauſible objections which are commonly alleged againſt the mildneſs and equity of the divine adminiſtration; and from all that has been ſaid, I hope it now appears, that nothing can be more unreaſonable or blaſphemous, than to lay the blame of the ſinner's deſtruction upon God. "The fooliſhneſs of man," ſaith Solomon, "perverteth his way; and "his heart fretteth againſt the Lord." (Prov. xix. 3.) This is the true account of the matter. The ſinner deſtroys himſelf by his own wilful and obſtinate folly, and then he accuſes God, as if he were the cauſe of his miſery; although God hath done every thing to ſave him, which could have been done by the righteous Lawgiver and Governor of the world.

The lying lips ſhall ere long be put to ſi-

lence. The workers of iniquity ſhall ſtand ſelf-condemned before the awful tribunal; and all their vain and impious pretexts and excuſes, inſtead of availing them in that day, will only ſerve to increaſe their ſhame and confuſion. With what inconceivable remorſe and anguiſh will the ſinner then review his paſt conduct? How contemptible will thoſe temptations then appear to him, which he once magnified ſo much, when he ſhall compare them with the powerful motives and encouragements to a holy life, which were in vain ſo often and ſo plainly ſet before him? When he ſhall recollect the various means and inſtruments which were employed to ſave him from ruin; the full and the free offers which were made to him of pardoning mercy, and of ſanctifying grace; the earneſt calls and invitations which he received to turn from his evil way, and live: When he ſhall view that precious fountain, in which thouſands, as guilty as himſelf, have been waſhed and made clean; and ſhall reflect that all theſe advantages are for ever loſt;—how ſhall he then hang down his head, and ſmite his guilty and deſpair-

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ing breaſt? ſaying, in the bitterneſs of his ſoul, "How have I hated inſtruction, and "my heart deſpiſed reproof? and have not "obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor in- "clined mine ear to them that inſtructed "me?" (Prov. v. 12, 13.) Then ſhall all his complaints be turned againſt himſelf; and, inſtead of reſting on his wonted excuſes, he ſhall then call, but call in vain, "on the mountains and on the rocks to fall "on him, and to hide him from the face of "Him who ſitteth on the throne, and from "the wrath of the Lamb." O that men were wiſe, and would conſider theſe things, ſo as to prevent, by a timely repentance, the horrors of that awful day which is haſtening faſt to ſurpriſe a ſleeping world.

My brethren, I have repreſented your danger to you as plainly as I could. I have endeavoured to expoſe the weakneſs of thoſe pitiful evaſions by which many of you endeavour to ſupport a vain hope, or at leaſt to leſſen the awful apprehenſions of a judgement to come. I have ſpoken to your ears: God alone can ſpeak to your hearts; and to his mercy and grace I commend you.—Al-

low me, before I conclude, to beg your attention to the following conſiderations.

Conſider, that to be your own deſtroyers, is to counteract the very ſtrongeſt principle of your natures, the principle of ſelf-preſervation. Every creature naturally deſireth its own felicity; and will you obſtinately ruſh upon manifeſt ruin, through all the obſtacles that are placed in your way? Aſſiſtants you may find in accompliſhing this deſperate purpoſe: but without your own conſent and active concurrence, it never can be accompliſhed, even though the whole world, and all the hoſt of apoſtate ſpirits, were combined againſt you. Will you be worſe than devils to yourſelves? What pity can you expect to meet with, who have no pity for your own ſouls? The unfortunate are objects of compaſſion; but wilful ſelf-deſtroyers, neither deſerve compaſſion, nor can expect it.——Conſider what an aggravation this will be of your miſery in a future ſtate? How terrible will it be to recollect, in the regions of everlaſting wo, that ye have brought all your miſery on yourſelves? that you were forewarned, repeatedly

edly and awfully forewarned, of the fatal iſſue of your conduct, but without effect? that Chriſt and eternal ſalvation were freely offered to you, but were contemptuouſly deſpiſed and ſet at nought? Theſe conſiderations will add a continual fuel to the tormenting flames, and will make them burn with inſufferable violence. O then be wiſe in time: "Seek the Lord while he "may be found, and call upon him while "he is near. Let the wicked forſake his "way, and the unrighteous man his "thoughts, and let him return unto the "Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, "and to our God, for he will abundantly "pardon."———To conclude: Ponder the wholeſome advice recorded in Prov. viii. 33—36. "Hear inſtruction, and be wiſe, "and refuſe it not. Bleſſed is the man "that heareth me, watching daily at my "gates, waiting at the poſts of my doors. "For whoſo findeth me, findeth life, and "ſhall obtain favour of the Lord. But "he that ſinneth againſt me, wrongeth his "own ſoul. All they that hate me, love "death." *Amen.*

SERMON IV.

GALATIANS vi. 4.

Let every man prove his own work.

BEFORE I enter upon the ſubject of this text, it may not be improper to mention ſome of the reaſons which have led me to it at this time *.

1*ſt*, As many who call themſelves Chriſtians, diſcover ſo little of Chriſtianity in their lives, that we are often at a loſs to reconcile their conduct with their profeſſions; I thought it might be of uſe to thoſe who are in any degree diſtinguiſhed by their religious conduct, if I could lead them into ſuch a ſcrutiny of themſelves as this text ſuggeſts to us; or perſuade them to inquire, whether their works, which are apparently good, are ſuch as will abide the teſt: whether they proceed from the Spirit of God, or

* Preached on the evening of a communion-ſabbath.

or from the ſpirit of the world: whether they are animated by a "ſimplicity and "godly ſincerity," or by the unhallowed principles of ſelf-love, and the deſire of recommending themſelves to the eſteem of men.

2dly, It is evident from Scripture, that a man may go far in the outward performance of his duty, and yet be actuated by ſuch motives as afford him greater cauſe of grief and of ſhame than of that rejoicing which is mentioned in the clauſe following my text. I read in the preceding verſe, that it is poſſible for a "man to think him-"ſelf to be ſomething when he is nothing." I find in fact that the Laodiceans imagined themſelves to be "rich, and increaſed with "goods, and having need of nothing," when, in truth, they were "wretched, and "miſerable, and poor, and blind, and na-"ked." And there are too many reaſons to ſuſpect, that like thoſe, multitudes of this preſent generation are "pure in their own "eyes, and yet are not waſhed from their "filthineſs;" have a "name that they live," while "they are dead;" and have "the

"praiſe

" praiſe of men," while " their hearts are " not right with God."

3dly, I foreſee the time when thouſands ſhall wiſh that they had followed the Apoſtle's advice in my text. " Yet a little " while, and he that ſhall come will come, " and will not tarry."—" The Lord him- " ſelf ſhall deſcend from heaven with a " ſhout, with the voice of the archangel, " and the trump of God; to judge the " world in righteouſneſs. In that day " many ſhall ſay to him, Lord, Lord, did " we not eat and drink in thy preſence, " have we not propheſied in the name, " and in thy name done many wonderful " works?" But when they receive that awful reply, " Depart from me, I know " you not whence ye are," with what inconceivable anguiſh will they then cry out, Oh! that we had tried and proved thoſe ſpecious works in which we truſted.—We thought them good and acceptable to God; alas! too late, we find our unhappy miſtake. The time was, when this diſcovery might have profited us: but now the doom is paſſed; our ſtate is fixed; and nothing remains for us but a fruitleſs remorſe, and the

the galling remembrance of our former ſloth and ſecurity.—And,

Laſtly, When I conſidered that I was to ſpeak to communicants, who have this day ſealed either their friendſhip or their enmity with Chriſt at his own table, it determined me to addreſs to you a preſſing and earneſt call to prove this part of your work in particular: that, ſuch as have been properly employed in this holy ſervice, may, after trial of themſelves, lay hold of the comforts which belong to them; and that others may receive ſuch a view of their guilt and of their danger, as, by the grace of God, ſhall conſtrain them to have immediate recourſe to that injured, but compaſſionate Saviour, whoſe blood, inſtead of crying for vengeance, pleads for mercy to the chief of ſinners. On all theſe accounts let me intreat, not only the hearing of your ears, but the attention of your minds, whilſt I endeavour, through divine aid,

1*ſt*, To explain the full meaning or import of the Apoſtle's exhortation——"Let "every man prove his own work."

2*dly*, To give you ſome directions with regard

regard to the manner of conducting the inquiry to which the exhortation relates, and then to point out to you the practical improvement of the ſubject.—I begin with the exhortation itſelf, " Let every man prove " his own work."

There is a particular emphaſis in theſe words, which muſt not be overlooked. It is his *own* work that a man muſt prove. We are ſufficiently ready to examine, and to paſs ſentence upon the works of others. We are often abroad; but are ſeldom at home, where our chief buſineſs lies. Like ſome travellers, who are well acquainted with foreign countries, but ſhamefully ignorant of their own; we know more of others than we are willing to know of ourſelves; and perſuade ourſelves, that the ſtudy of our own hearts is a dull and melancholy buſineſs, which may incite within us many uneaſy thoughts, and can give us no pleaſure at all.

Alas! how low are we ſunk by our apoſtaſy from God! and with what little and falſe conſolations may a degenerate mind be ſoothed! Inſtead of looking inwards for poſitive

poſitive evidence of our favour with God, we learn to regulate our judgment of ourſelves, by what we perceive in the characters of other men. If the image of the devil is more viſibly formed on others than on ourſelves, we have little anxiety to diſcover the image of God upon our own hearts. The bulk of men think it enough to know that ſome of their brethren are worſe than they are, as if their characters would riſe, in proportion as the characters of others are debaſed.—We muſt relinquiſh this falſe rule of judging, if we would either enter into the ſpirit of the exhortation in the text, or would not be fatally diſappointed at laſt. We muſt learn to rejoice in ourſelves, and not in others; and we muſt call in our thoughts from the ſtate of other men, and "prove every man his own work."—— "Every man," ſaith the Apoſtle, "ſhall "bear his own burden." Each of us ſhall give an account of his own conduct to God, and ſhall be judged according to his own perſonal behaviour, without regard to any comparative goodneſs or attainments which may belong to him.

But

But here, perhaps, ſome may aſk the queſtion, To what works do you refer? If they are works of a doubtful nature, we acknowledge that they ought to be tried, and that thoſe are highly to blame who neglect to try them. But are there not other works, ſo eminently good and excellent in themſelves, that the perſon who doth them, may conclude, without heſitation, that they are certainly pleaſing and acceptable to God? This, my brethren, is a rock upon which thouſands have made ſhipwreck. It would make one ſad to think what multitudes will be ſurpriſed with the everlaſting burnings, who, in conſequence of this very opinion, flatter themſelves, while they live, with the hopes of heaven. You muſt therefore allow me to retort the queſtion, and to aſk, What are thoſe works which are ſo eminently good and excellent, that there is no need to prove them? or rather, Are there any duties of an external nature, which an hypocrite cannot perform as well as you? Do you frequent the church, and atttend upon the preaching of the Word? So did the impenitent

nitent Jews in the days of the Prophet Ezekiel, with as much decency, perhaps, and apparent devotion, as are ſeen in you. For thus ſaid the Lord unto that Prophet, "They come unto thee as the people co-"meth, and they ſit before thee as my peo-"ple, and they hear thy words, but they "will not do them: for with their mouth "they ſhew much love, but their heart "goeth after their covetouſneſs." Are you ſtrict obſervers of the Sabbath? We read of ſome who perſecuted our Saviour for working a miracle of mercy on the ſabbath-day: and ſurely you pretend not to a greater degree of ſtrictneſs than this. Do you pray? So did the Phariſees; they made long prayers, and they prayed with a loud voice. Do you faſt before the obſervation of the Lord's ſupper? The Phariſees did more: They faſted twice in the week. Do you partake of that holy ſacrament? Many think that Judas did ſo too: we know at leaſt that he was preſent at the paſſover, which was alſo a ſolemn rite of religion: And therefore no certain concluſion

ſion can be drawn from the outward exerciſes of religious worſhip.

Where then ſhall we go next? Will we judge with more certainty from the duties of the ſecond table of the law of God?

Here, my brethren, the matter may be brought to a very ſhort iſſue. We read of a young man who profeſſed, in the preſence of our Lord, that he had kept all theſe commandments from his youth:—and yet we learn from the ſequel of his ſtory, that he preferred the profeſſions of this earth to the enjoyment of God; for he refuſed to ſell his lands for the relief of the poor, although our Saviour had aſſured him of treaſure in heaven.—But you have perhaps to ſay for yourſelves, that you are charitable and kind to the poor; and aſk if this is not a duty applauded in Scripture? I confeſs it is much applauded. But were not the proud and hypocritical Phariſees alſo charitable? They gave alms: and more liberal alms than moſt of us; otherwiſe, I ſuppoſe, they would have ſounded the trumpet as little as we do. —We may therefore conclude, that none of all theſe outward deeds are ſufficient, by

themſelves, to diſtinguiſh us from the hypocrite: But the queſtion will return, May we not join all theſe works together? and in that caſe, may we not draw from them a certain concluſion?

My brethren, if I were now ſpeaking of the judgment which others ought to form of your characters, from what they ſee in your actions, I would certainly ſay, that thoſe favourable appearances ought to perſuade them that you are real Chriſtians. But as I ſpeak of the eſtimate which you are to make yourſelves, I muſt tell you, that all this fair ſhow may certainly conſiſt with a heart that is not "found in God's "ſtatutes." For Amaziah, the king of Judah, was not far ſhort of this, of whom we read (2 Chron. xxv. 2), that he "did that "which was right in the ſight of the Lord;" "but (obſerve what follows, he did it) "not with a perfect heart." What a promiſing appearance was here blaſted! Amaziah gave God every thing but his heart; the very thing which God valued, and without which all that he could give beſides was inſignificant. Does not this ſhake the

foundation of your confidence, and make you, like one newly awakened out of a flattering dream, ſummon up all your attention to ſee whether you are in the unhappy ſituation of Amaziah, or are really in the circumſtances in which your own fancy hath repreſented you? This, my brethren, is the very thing which I have been aiming at. I foreſee the day, when many who were ſomething in their own eyes, and truſted in themſelves that they were righteous, will preſent their ſpecious roll of outward duties to the heart-ſearching Judge, ſaying, Lo! this is the life which we ſpent in the fleſh; who will not be able to add, This life was "by the faith of the Son of God." Methinks I hear the Judge ſay to them, Theſe are indeed the duties which I enjoined; but where is the ſpirit which ſhould have animated them? Theſe are the ſacrifices which I appointed; but the ſtrange fire with which you offered them, can find no acceptance here. Ye have not ſerved me, but yourſelves. "I never knew you." And therefore ye can receive no reward.

What hath been ſaid may be ſufficient to ex-

explain the Apoſtle's exhortation; and to ſhow both the reaſonableneſs and the neceſſity of proving even our beſt works. I proceed now,

Secondly, To give you ſome directions with regard to the manner of conducting this important inquiry.

Now, before a man can be qualified for proving his own works, two things are indiſpenſably neceſſary. The

1ſt is, That he ſhould be well acquainted with the holy Scriptures: for it is by the Scriptures alone that we know with certainty what is good and acceptable to God. "Wherewith ſhall a young man cleanſe his "way?" ſaid David. The anſwer is, "By "taking heed thereto according to thy "word." Scripture is that unerring rule which points out to us the road of duty, and which diſcovers to us the ſtraightneſs or the crookedneſs of our own paths. A conſiderable degree of acquaintance with it, is therefore abſolutely neceſſary, to enable us "to prove" and to judge of our own works. But,

2*dly*, It is alſo requiſite, that we ſhould be conſtant and diligent obſervers of what paſſeth in our own hearts; for "out of the "heart are the iſſues of life." The heart is the fountain from which all our actions flow, and from which alone they can be truly denominated either good or bad. I obſerved formerly, that there is no outward duty which a hypocrite may not counterfeit: And we have a remarkable example (2 Kings x.) of the ſame action being good in one man, and bad in another, from the different diſpoſitions with which it was performed. We find two men riding in the ſame chariot, and both of them engaged in the ſame expedition, Jehu and Jonadab. But though the work they were executing was the ſame, the different ends which they aimed at, made that which was an excellent duty in Jonadab, an act of mere cruelty and of vile hypocriſy in Jehu. Jehu was impelled, not by zeal for the Lord, but by ambition to wear a crown. We muſt therefore retire into our own breaſts, and carefully obſerve the various operations of our minds. We muſt conſider the motives

that

that influence our conduct; the ends we propoſe in our actions; and the temper and frame of ſpirit with which every duty is performed. For in vain do we know the rule, unleſs we alſo know the thing to which it muſt be applied; in vain do we read and ſtudy the Scriptures, unleſs we likewiſe read and ſtudy our own hearts. The duty I am recommending, conſiſts in comparing them together, that we may diſcover how far they agree, and wherein they differ. This is indeed a work of great difficulty; but, though difficult, it is not impracticable. He who gave the command, will likewiſe grant his aſſiſtance to thoſe who, in a humble dependence on his grace, apply themſelves heartily to this neceſſary duty. Let it then be your

Firſt care, to get your minds thoroughly awakened when you enter upon this work. Never was time put to a higher improvement: never were thoughts ſpent upon a more important buſineſs. Compared with this, the trial of men for their lives at a human bar is a mere trifle; for here nothing leſs than an eternal intereſt depends on the

iſſue. Summon up all the powers of your ſouls, bring your thoughts to the ſubject as intenſely as you can, let your minds be diveſted of every other care; and above all—O be honeſt with yourſelves, and reſolve to paſs an impartial ſentence, as the evidence ſhall appear, whether it ſhould be in your favour, or againſt you. Remember that your great Judge knows the truth of your condition, and that therefore you can gain nothing by hiding it from yourſelves.

When your hearts are once ſeriouſly engaged, then fall down before God, and plead the aſſiſtance of his good Spirit, to enlighten and direct you in the knowledge of yourſelves; to keep you from miſtakes, both on the one hand and on the other; and to guide you to a juſt and an affecting view of your true condition.

Having thus prepared yourſelves by meditation and prayer, proceed immediately to the inquiry itſelf, before your hearts begin to cool, or the impreſſions of the divine preſence are effaced. Set the word of God before you as the rule, and then put the queſtion, Do my actions and diſpoſitions correſpond

correſpond to this rule, or are they inconſiſtent with it? Take your actions, and the ſources of them, one by one, and bring them to this ſtandard; ſuffer not your hearts, in any caſe, to ſtart aſide, till they have given an explicit anſwer: lay the command of God upon them, and charge them to obey upon pain of his wrath.

When, by theſe means, you have diſcovered the truth, then paſs the ſentence on yourſelves, and labour to have your hearts properly affected with it. Do not think it enough to have diſcerned your true condition, but endeavour to feel what God hath made you to know. If you find, that you have been all along formal and hypocritical in your obedience; that inſtead of ſerving God, you have been ſerving yourſelves; that inſtead of ſeeking his approbation, you have been courting the applauſe of men; that inſtead of ſowing to the Spirit, you have been ſowing to the fleſh; O lay this conviction home to your hearts. Think what a dreadful ſtate you are in; unpardoned, unſanctified, and, if death ſhould now ſurpriſe you, ruined for ever.

But, whilſt you thus endeavour to know the very worſt of your condition, beware, at the ſame time, of giving way to gloomy and deſponding thoughts. Let none of you ſay, "Becauſe I am ungodly, I ſhall die ſo; be- "cauſe I am an hypocrite, I ſhall continue "ſo;" for ſuch deſpondence is no leſs unwarranted than your former preſumption. You have another work to do, which is to flee ſpeedily to Chriſt, and to break off your hypocriſy and wickedneſs by repentance. If you find that you have been hitherto out of the way, do not ſit down and deſpair, but make the more haſte to turn into it. Chriſt is ſtill in your offer, and you cannot be more willing to receive him, than he is to accept of you.

But, on the other hand, if you find reaſon to conclude, after a ſtrict and impartial examination, that you have been ſincere in the practice of your duty, that your inward diſpoſitions have correſponded to your outward actions, and that both have been according to the rule of Scripture, take the comfort of ſo happy a diſcovery. This is a good evidence that you are ſanctified and renewed

renewed by the Spirit of God: This is a proof that you are united to Chriſt, who is "the true vine:" for none but thoſe who are united to him, can bring forth ſuch good fruit. Conſider into what a bleſſed ſtate the Lord hath brought you; to be his children and his friends; to be pardoned and ſanctified, and ſure of being ſaved. What more can you deſire? Doth not the aſſurance of ſuch a bleſſed condition deſerve all the labour and pains which the inquiry can coſt you? One caution, however, I muſt give you. Do not truſt ſo much to one diſcovery of this kind, as to give up all further trial. No.—"To prove your own works," muſt be your daily employment. Renew the inquiry often; make frequent proof of yourſelves; compare the reſult of your obſervations at different times, and let them ſerve to rectify one another.

Thus, my brethren, I have given you the beſt directions which I could think of, with regard to the method of conducting this important inquiry. And here it might be proper to ſubjoin ſome of thoſe Scriptural marks or characters by which "every man

"ought

" ought to prove his own works." But this would lead me beyond the limits of one diſcourſe. I mean therefore at preſent to confine myſelf to the circumſtances or marks by which you ought to try the important duty in which you have been this day employed.

Allow me then, in the concluſion of this ſolemn ſervice, to put a few plain but neceſſary queſtions to you, and to call on you to anſwer them, as you hope to ſpeed at the bar of God's judgment.

1*ſt*, By what motives were you determined to come here this day? Was it by a ſenſe of duty, and in obedience to the command of a crucified Saviour? Was it from a mind " hungering and thirſting" after Chriſt and his righteouſneſs? Or was it only in compliance with the cuſtom of the country, and from a deſire of appearing religious in the eyes of men? Would to God there were leſs cauſe than there is for this queſtion, groſs and reproachful as it may appear!

2*dly*, What pains were you at in preparing yourſelves for this near approach to God? Were you careful to ſtir up in yourſelves

ſelves thoſe holy and humble diſpoſitions which conſtitute "the wedding garment" of thoſe who are bidden to the feaſt? Or, have you, without any previous examination, or any regard to the awful fence which ſurrounds this table, fearleſsly taken your ſeat among faithful diſciples, without aſking the Maſter's welcome, or dreading his diſpleaſure?

3*dly*, What benefit did you propoſe to reap from your attendance upon this ſolemn ordinance? Did you only wiſh to pacify your natural conſcience, by doing what you apprehended to be an acceptable duty? Or did you mean to offer an outward compliment to the Almighty, in order to induce him to pardon what is paſt, that you might ſin, as it were, on a new ſcore? Or, on the other hand, did you come here in the hope of meeting him whom your ſouls love, to take upon you "his yoke which is "eaſy, and his burden which is light?"—to implore, over the pledges of your Saviour's love, his mercy to pardon, his Spirit to ſanctify, and his grace to ſtrengthen you? Did you come, that this holy ſervice might

have

have ſome influence to aſſiſt you in crucifying " the old man with his deeds," and to confirm the image of God on your ſouls?—Once more,

4thly, How were you employed while you ſat at this holy table? Did you ſeek the Lord with your whole hearts? Did your " ſouls follow hard after him?" And if any vain intruding thought aroſe within you, did you inſtantly check it with abhorrence, and renew your repentance for that mixture of infirmity in your holy ſervice? When you heard theſe affecting words, " This is my body broken for you, " this is my blood ſhed for the remiſſion of " of your ſins," were your hearts wrung with grief for the ſins which were the cauſe of the Redeemer's ſufferings? Did you give yourſelves entirely up to him who gave himſelf for you an offering and a ſacrifice to God? Did you accept of him as your only peace-maker with the Father, and reſolve to build all your hopes of happineſs upon the merits of his ſufferings and obedience? Did you renounce all his enemies, and devote yourſelves entirely to his ſervice,

ſervice, to be governed by his laws, as your only Lord and King?

Finally, Was all this done from a deliberate and confirmed choice, and not from a mere tranſient flaſh of devotion? Then, indeed, you have been well employed; and we deſire to give glory to God on your account.

But if, on the contrary, your hearts have been cold and inſenſible, and your thoughts have been wandering without controul, upon the mountains of vanity; if you have felt no grief for ſin, no love to the Redeemer, or only ſuch a grief and love as a moving tale might have occaſioned; if what you have felt hath not led you to bind yourſelves irrevocably to the ſervice of that Redeemer, who encountered the wrath of God for you—this was not to eat the Lord's ſupper. Alas! my heart bleeds for you. Ye have been mocking him who declared that he will not be mocked with impunity; and who, unleſs you repent, will certainly convince you of this in another world.

Theſe are all the queſtions which I ſhall put

put to you at this time; and in whatever way you may find reaſon to anſwer them, the inquiry muſt turn out to your advantage. If, upon ſearch, you diſcover the unſoundneſs of your hearts, even in that very ſad diſcovery, you have the greateſt advantage for ſalvation that you have ever had in the courſe of your lives. For now, your vain confidence being overthrown, you lie open to a deep and effectual conviction, which is the mercy introductive of all other mercies to your ſouls. Your chief danger lies in judging too favourably, or in judging falſely, of yourſelves. But if you do ſo, how ſeverely will you ſuffer for the ſhort-lived deceit, when God ſhall himſelf prove your works, or when he ſhall ſay to you, as he ſaid to the carouſing king, "Thou art weighed in the balances, and art "found wanting?" How confounded will you be if this ſentence ſhall be pronounced? and how paſſionately will you then wiſh for ſuch an opportunity of "proving your "own works" as you now enjoy?

But if, on the other hand, you can, upon good grounds, conclude, that notwithſtanding

ſtanding many imperfections in your holy ſervice, you have been ſincere and upright on the whole, how great may your comfort be? For God will not caſt off the upright man. That which is the terror of the wicked will be your joy. As the ſon of a king rejoiceth in his father's power and magnificence, ſo may you rejoice in thoſe diſplays of the divine Majeſty, which ſcare a guilty world. How comfortable will the thoughts of a Saviour be, when you can ſay, "My beloved is mine;" when by faith you can, like Thomas, "put your hand into "his ſide, and your finger into the print of "the nails, and ſay unto him, My Lord, "and my God!" With what joy will you read the holy Scriptures, as the charter of your future inheritance, and ponder that "exceeding and eternal weight of glory," which you ſhall one day poſſeſs? With what holy boldneſs may you approach the throne of grace, when you can addreſs God as your reconciled father in Jeſus Chriſt? How cheerfully may you endure affliction? How calmly may you leave this world?

If then any of theſe comforts are dear to you;

you; if you would enjoy them in a ſound ſtate, or would have a clear and lively impreſſion of them, let me beſeech you to comply with the Apoſtle's exhortation, and to " prove your own works." So ſhall ye have your rejoicing in yourſelves, and never be aſhamed. *Amen.*

SER-

SERMON V.

JAMES iv. 17.

Therefore, to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is ſin.

THE unfruitful lives of profeſſing Chriſtians is a very general and a juſt complaint. But few of thoſe who retail this complaint, are heartily inclined to remove the cauſe of it. We are melancholy examples of that which we pretend to lament; and we ceaſe not to ſtrengthen the intereſts of a party which we condemn. David, when he was treating with Araunah the Jebuſite, for the purchaſe of his threſhing floor, in order to rear an altar to God, refuſed to accept of it without a price, becauſe he would not "offer burnt-offerings "unto the Lord his God, of that which "coſt him nothing." But, alas! our gene-

ral conteſt ſeems rather to be, who ſhall be moſt penurious in his offerings to God, and who ſhall purchaſe heaven with the eaſieſt ſervice. Many have unhappily deceived themſelves into an opinion, that nothing but poſitive acts of rebellion will ſubject them to puniſhment. They place much confidence in what is called a harmleſs inoffenſive life, as if it were virtue enough not to be abandoned to vice. They ſeem to aim at nothing higher, than that of which the Phariſee made his boaſt, when he gave thanks to God that he was not as other men, nor even as the humble publican. But, in the paſſage which I have now read to you, the Apoſtle directs us to a much ſafer teſt of our conduct; a teſt which leaves us no room for miſtake. The queſtion is not, What vices have you forborne? but, What virtues have you practiſed? You ſay that you are not idolaters.—Well,—but do you reverence and love the true God? You are not adulterers;—but do you ſtudy temperance and ſobriety in all things? You are not ſlanderers;—but are you as tender of your neighbour's good name as of your own?

If

If ye are ſtrangers to theſe poſitive virtues, then all the advantage ye can pretend to is this; ye are ſinners of a lower order, than if ye had added poſitive tranſgreſſions to your neglect of doing good: but ſtill you are ſinners; for, according to the Apoſtle, not to do good is ſin.

This text evidently contains the two following propoſitions:

1*ſt*, That men ſin, not only when they poſitively tranſgreſs the law of God; but alſo, when they do not fulfil the duties which the law requires to the utmoſt of their power. And,

2*dly*, That our guilt is more highly aggravated, when we neglect the duties which are known to us; or when we decline opportunities of doing good, though we know that it is our duty to embrace them.

Theſe propoſitions I will endeavour to illuſtrate and confirm; and will then conclude with a practical improvement of the ſubject.

Firſt, I begin with ſhowing you, that men ſin, not only when they poſitively tranſgreſs the law of God; but alſo, when they

do not fulfil the duties which the law requires, to the utmoſt of their power.

Were we to look upon God as an auſtere and ſelfiſh Being, who employed his laws only as a fence about his own private intereſts; then indeed, not to violate them might be conſidered as ſufficient to comply with their deſign. The kings of this earth are forced to encloſe their little allotment of honour, and to uſe their authority as a flaming ſword, to ward off inſults from their prerogatives. But it is not ſo with God. The Creator of heaven and of earth can have no dependence on the workmanſhip of his own hands. His prerogatives cannot ſuffer, nor can his glory be impaired by the feeble and impotent attempts of his creatures. His laws therefore could never be intended for his own ſecurity, but for our benefit. They are expreſſions of his goodneſs, rather than of his ſovereignty; and his great view in enacting them, ſeems to have been, to bind us by his authority, to conſult our preſent intereſt, and to render ourſelves capable of everlaſting felicity. Judge then, whether a law which hath in view this kind

kind and generous object, doth not challenge our moſt cordial acceptance and entire ſubjection; and whether gratitude, as well as duty, ſhould not prompt us to fulfil every part of it to the utmoſt of our power.

Indeed, if we conſider God as a ſevere taſkmaſter, as I am afraid too many of us do; in that caſe, whatever he enjoins, will appear to be an hardſhip or a burden. But if we view him in his true character, as a wiſe and good parent, who in every thing conſults the real advantage of his children, then his yoke will appear to be eaſy indeed, and his burden to be light. The cords of love will draw us on to obedience; and gratitude, which is ever ingenious in finding out ways to expreſs itſelf, will conſtantly prompt us to the moſt dutiful obſervance of his will.

Show me the man whoſe ingenuous mind, not only expects a future reward, but feels a preſent joy in the ſervice of his God: and to that man I will addreſs the words of unfeigned ſalutation. I will ſay to him, "Hail thou favoured of the Lord," thine is the true "ſpirit of adoption," which de-

viſeth liberal things; thine is that ſoul which is born from on high, and which doth not commit ſin; thine is that love which fulfilleth the law, and which perfecteth the ſaints.

But ſhow me the man whoſe ſervile ſoul is moved only by the fear of puniſhment, to yield a grudging and penurious ſervice to his Maker; and to that man I muſt be ſparing of conſolation. I muſt remind him, that it is the heart which God requires; that God hath reſpect to the offering of a liberal giver; but that he hath no regard to the churl, or to his offering.

Thus far I might argue upon general principles, that we ought not only to abſtain from what the law of God prohibits, but alſo to fulfil, to the utmoſt of our power, what the ſpirit or intention of the law requires. But as I ſpeak to Chriſtians, I will now reſort to an authority which they muſt acknowledge to be valid, and ſufficient to decide the queſtion.

The propoſition which I have laid down then, is not deduced by remote inference, neither does it depend upon a ſingle teſtimony;

mony; but is both ſupported and illuſtrated by a multitude of clear and expreſs declarations of Scripture.

We are commanded, not only to "depart "from evil," but "to do good;" not only "to cleanſe ourſelves from all filthineſs of "the fleſh and ſpirit," but alſo "to perfect "holineſs in the fear of God." Chriſt is propoſed to us as our example; and what was his character? "He went about doing "good, and perſiſted, till he had finiſhed "the work which was given him to do." Nay, he ſaith himſelf (John ix. 4.), "I *muſt* "work the works of him that ſent me." And if he, who voluntarily came under the law, was bound to this active and extenſive ſervice, ſhall we, who are its neceſſary ſubjects, plead an exemption from it? Paul, in his epiſtle to Titus (chap. iii 11.), informs us, that "the grace of God, which hath "appeared to all men, bringing ſalvation, "teacheth us not only to deny ungodlineſs "and worldly luſts, but to live ſoberly, and "righteouſly, and godly in the world;" and that Chriſt gave himſelf for us, for this end, "that he might redeem us from all ini-

" quity, and purify to himſelf a peculiar " people, zealous of good works."

Theſe paſſages of Scripture need no commentary. All of them point out the neceſſity of a poſitive and an active obedience.

But this is not all. Our bleſſed Lord, who well knew what was in man, ſeems to have directly calculated ſome of his diſcourſes, to prevent the poſſibility of a miſtake on this ſubject. The parables of the rich man and Lazarus, of the talents and of the barren fig-tree, plainly appear to have been delivered with this view.

We are not told that the rich man was in any reſpect injurious or oppreſſive to Lazarus: his guilt lay in his not extending his kindneſs to ſupply his wants. The unprofitable ſervant was caſt into outer darkneſs, not for loſing or ſquandering away his talent, but for hiding it in a napkin, and neglecting to improve it. And the fig-tree was cut down, and caſt into the fire, not for producing bad fruit, but becauſe it produced no fruit at all. But leſt the allegorical dreſs of theſe inſtructions ſhould leave men at too great liberty to explain away the force

of

of them, this wife and provident Teacher, in a ſerious and awful diſcourſe on the proceſs of the laſt judgment, reſumes the ſame argument, (Matth. xxv. 31.—). There he tells us expreſsly, that men ſhall not only be puniſhed for doing evil, but alſo for neglecting to perform active ſervice; and in particular, for neglecting to perform the offices of humanity to their brethren. For the charge runs in theſe words: "I "was an hungred, and ye gave me no "meat; I was thirſty, and ye gave me no "drink; I was a ſtranger, and ye took "me not in; naked, and ye clothed me "not; ſick, and in priſon, and ye viſited "me not."—"For in as much as ye did it "not to the leaſt of theſe my brethren, ye "did it not to me." And then follows the doom to be pronounced on thoſe againſt whom this charge is brought: "Theſe "ſhall go away into everlaſting puniſh-"ment."

From theſe paſſages of Scripture, we learn with aſſurance, that unleſs life is filled up with good works, death, which introduceth us to judgment, muſt approach to us with a dark

dark and gloomy aſpect. When conſcience, awakened with the dawning of an everlaſting day, ſhall prompt us to inquire, What we have done? How we have improved our time, our talents, and the means of grace with which we have been favoured? If in this review of ourſelves, we ſhall be able to diſcover nothing but the traces of vanity and impertinence, how muſt we ſhrink back, and tremble to venture on the awful ſtate before us? If God will judge every man according to his works, alas! what muſt become of the unhappy ſluggard, who hath no works to ſhow; who hath ſlept, and trifled, and ſquandered away all his time? "O that men were wiſe, that they un- "derſtood this, that they would conſider "their latter end!"——"How long, O ye "ſimple ones, will ye love ſimplicity?" How long, O ſinner, ſhall that precious time on which eternity depends, be waſted in the purſuit of lying vanities? O think, how ſwiftly it paſſeth away, and how paſſionately thou wilt one day wiſh to recal it. Who can aſſure thee that the decree is not already gone forth againſt thee, "Cut him off, why "cum-

" cumbereth he the ground."—" Thou fool, " this night thy ſoul ſhall be required of " thee."

Pardon me, then, if I ſpeak to you as ſhort-lived, or as dying creatures; ſome of whom I may never ſee again, till we meet before the judgment-ſeat of God. Under this impreſſion, let me deal freely with you, and call on you to review your paſt conduct, as if the Lord himſelf were demanding an account of it.

Say, then, hath it been ſuitable to the rank you hold in life? Hath it even been rational? ſuch as became thoſe high intellectual powers by which you are raiſed above the beaſts that periſh? Would you conſent to have it publiſhed before this congregation? Or rather, are there not ſome parts of it which you would wiſh to hide from your moſt intimate friends; leſt, partial as they are to you, the knowledge of them ſhould quench their affection, and render you contemptible in their eyes? Are you then ready to appear in judgment, and to have all your thoughts and words

and

and actions laid open and canvaſſed before an aſſembled world?

I ſhall not ſuppoſe you guilty of groſs acts of wickedneſs. Perhaps the influence of education, the power of natural conſcience, and the reſtraints of Providence, have hitherto kept you back from theſe. I at preſent charge you with nothing worſe than the omiſſion of duty, and the neglect of opportunities for cultivating and improving the talents which God hath given you. You have been thoughtleſs and inconſiderate, unmindful of the God who made you, and of the Redeemer who bought you with his blood. You have forgotten the end for which you was ſent into the world. You have ſuffered the cares and pleaſures of the preſent life, the buſineſs or amuſements of this fleeting ſcene of vanity, to divide your hearts, and engroſs your time, as if the ſoul had been deſtined to ſerve the body; or as if this earth had been deſigned for your only reſidence and portion.

Can you then review ſuch a life without bluſhing and ſhame? When you think of it, doth it not appear mean and deſpicable even

even in your own eyes? And can it then be pleaſing; or rather, muſt it not be highly offenſive to that almighty Being, who gave you a nature fitted for the performance of nobler ſervices, and for the reliſh of higher enjoyments, than any with which you have been hitherto acquainted?

For the Lord's ſake open your eyes, and take a ſerious and impartial view of your condition. Bleſſed be God it is not yet too late. The door of mercy is ſtill open; and though, like the prodigal ſon, you have hitherto been feeding upon huſks; yet when, like him, ye ſhall return to your Father's houſe, and to the faithful and affectionate duty of children, your paſt wandering and uprofitable life ſhall be forgiven, and ye may yet enjoy the honours and privileges of your Father's ſons.

Having thus confirmed and illuſtrated the firſt propoſition contained in the text, namely, that men ſin, not only when they poſitively tranſgreſs the law of God; but alſo, when they do not fulfil the duties which the law requires to the utmoſt of

their power;—I proceed now to ſhow you, as was propoſed,

Secondly, That our guilt is more highly aggravated, when we neglect the duties which are known to us; or when we decline opportunities of doing good, though we are convinced that it is our duty to embrace them.

He who doth not ſeek for opportunities of doing good, is a ſinner; that is, he counteracts the obvious intention of his Maker in ſending him into the world: and therefore ſhall be dealt with as an unfaithful ſervant, who hath not applied his talents to the purpoſes for which they were given him. And, if this is the caſe, then ſurely the perſon who hath a known opportunity of doing good, and yet wilfully neglects it, muſt contract greater guilt, and be liable to a ſeverer puniſhment. If that man be culpable, who is careleſs of doing all the good which by an exertion of his talents he is able to do; is not that man much more culpable, who preſumptuouſly omits to do the good to which he has opportunities to ſolicit him?

But why ſhould I ſpend time in eſtabliſhing ſo plain a truth, eſpecially when it is already confirmed by the higheſt authority? Our bleſſed Lord himſelf expreſsly tells us (Luke xii. 47.), that "the ſervant who "knew his Lord's will, and prepared not "himſelf, neither did according to his will, "ſhall be beaten with many ſtripes."

The only queſtion that remains then is, Whether this be a ſuppoſition that can be made? Is it to be thought, that any man is capable of deliberately reſiſting his own conviction, and of declining obedience to a law which he both knows and believes to be binding on him?

I confeſs, indeed, that a ſuperior Being, if we could imagine him to be altogether unacquainted with human affairs, might reject this ſuppoſition as improbable. But ſurely *we* have no cauſe to object againſt the repreſentation as forced, or beyond the life. Our own obſervation, unleſs we have been extremely inattentive, cannot fail to furniſh us with numberleſs proofs of this determined neglect of duty. We need not go from home, to bring our examples from perſons

perſons in high and public truſt, who have been known to ſacrifice the acknowledged intereſt and honour of a whole nation to their own private reſentment or perſonal advantage. They are farther ſeen, for no other reaſon but becauſe they are placed higher. The importance of their ſtation renders their faults the more conſpicuous, while a groaning community points out, as with the finger, the authors of its diſtreſs. But let each of us look into his own breaſt; and if conſcience is not aſleep, it will ſay to us as Nathan ſaid to David, "Thou art the "man." Thou thyſelf haſt neglected the faireſt opportunities of doing good, when thou hadſt the ſtrongeſt conviction that it was thy reaſonable duty.

I mean not to pry into the ſecrets of your hearts, any more than to divulge the ſecrets of my own. But I ſpeak from a thorough conviction, that all of us paſs too ſlightly over our omiſſions, even in the moſt ſerious review which we take of our conduct. We are, alas! too fruitful in excuſes, and too ready to gloſs over our moſt culpable neglects, with the ſpecious colour of ignorance

norance or incapacity. But God, to whom the night ſhineth as the day, knows the conviction of mind againſt which we ſin; and our moſt dexterous arts of concealment cannot ſcreen us from his penetrating eye. A juſt impreſſion of this would prevent many fatal miſtakes in our conduct.

I have now, for example, an opportunity of doing good: and my conſcience tells me, that I ought to improve it. On the other hand, I have many ſtrong temptations to neglect it. It would put me to too much coſt or trouble; it would involve me in a train of action againſt which my indolence revolts; or it would divert me from other employments more agreeable to my inclination. On which ſide ſhall I reſolve? May I not ſo manage it, that the neglect ſhall eſcape the obſervation of my neighbour? Or if he ſhould perceive it, may I not put a good face upon it, and find out ſome excuſe to ſave me from his cenſure?—Ah! but here is the check. The Searcher of hearts knows my preſent conviction. In vain ſhall I attempt to prevaricate with him. I may elude the cenſure of man; but I never can eſcape

the juſt judgement of that God who is greater than my heart, and knoweth all things. Such reaſoning as this, if it were once become habitual to us, would be a conſtant and powerful incitement to all holy obedience; and would prevent the deep guilt of neglecting to do good, even when we know the extent and obligation of the law of God, and are convinced that it is our duty to comply with it.

Having thus endeavoured to illuſtrate and confirm the two propoſitions contained in my text, I proceed now to the practical improvement of the ſubject.—And,

1*ſt*, This ſubject adminiſters a ſharp reproof to thoſe who, in any caſe, attempt to evade their convictions of duty. "To him "that knoweth to do good," ſaith the Apoſtle, "and doth it not, to him it is ſin." For, conſider what kind of diſpoſition this conduct betrays. Is it not evidently the diſpoſition of a ſlaviſh and mercenary mind? You do no more in the ſervice of God than you ſuppoſe to be neceſſary, in order to eſcape eternal miſery; and this is the only

only conſideration which deters you from open tranſgreſſions of his law. You have therefore no regard for him, but only a concern for your own ſafety. Your plan of conduct is to offend God as far as you can, without incurring his vengeance: So that any appearance of goodneſs about you is nothing more than the effect of a natural timidity. Do ye thus requite the Lord, O fooliſh people and unwiſe? Doth this goodneſs challenge no better return from you, than merely to refrain from acts of open rebellion againſt him? Conſider, I beſeech you, the baſeneſs and ingratitude of this conduct; and if your hearts retain any ſpark of ingenuity, you will ſurely be perſuaded to yield him a more faithful and generous ſervice in time to come. But,

2*dly*, This ſubject adminiſters reproof alſo to the ſlothful and inactive ſervant, who reſts contented with low attainments in religion. You perhaps flatter yourſelf, that although you are remiſs in ſeeking out opportunities of doing good, yet you are not unfaithful to any known obligation. But in this caſe you greatly deceive yourſelf:

For, is it not a known obligation, that we ſhould aim at as much perfection as we are capable of attaining? But you have renounced this deſire altogether. In other words, you have deliberately left off that work to which our Saviour hath expreſsly commanded us to devote ourſelves. For, are not theſe his words? "Be ye perfect, "even as your Father who is in heaven is "perfect."—Once more,

What hath been ſaid on this ſubject ought to quicken the zeal and activity even of thoſe who have made the greateſt progreſs in the good ways of God.

The declining ſtate of religion calls loudly on all who are its real friends, to exert themſelves to the utmoſt, in order to revive its influence in the world. Nothing, be aſſured, will be ſo effectual for accompliſhing this deſireable object, as the bright and exemplary lives of profeſſing Chriſtians. Are you then zealous for the glory of God? be "zealous of good works." Let it appear that your religion gives authority to your conſcience, by your being more juſt and humane and generous than other men. "Ye

"Ye are the ſalt of the earth, ye are the "light of the world." Your divine Maſter hath intruſted you with the honour of that religion which he taught on earth, and expects that you ſhould diſplay it in an amiable light. But ſurely a mere negative degree of virtue will never convince men that your principles have any excellence ſuperior to their own: and that profeſſing Chriſtians ſatisfy themſelves with a virtue of this ſort, is, I am afraid, in no ſmall degree the cauſe to which the rapid growth of infidelity in theſe times muſt be aſcribed.

If this is at all the fact, doth it not afford us a ſubject of the moſt ſerious lamentation? "It is impoſſible but that of-"fences will come, but wo unto him thro' "whom they come. It were better for him "that a milſtone were hanged about his "neck, and he caſt into the ſea." O then ſtudy to adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour in all things. "Let your light ſo "ſhine before men, that they may ſee your "good works, and glorify your father "which is in heaven."——"Whatſoever "things are true, whatſoever things are ho-

" neſt, whatſoever things are juſt, whatſo-
" ever things are pure, whatſoever things
" are lovely, whatſoever things are of good
" report, and if there be any virtue, if there
" be any praiſe, think on theſe things," and do them. This will adminiſter to you true pleaſure in life, and ſolid hope in death; and hereafter the ſound of the laſt trumpet, the terror of the negligent and unfaithful ſervant, will be the triumphant ſignal of your releaſe from the grave, and the ſummons of your Lord to enter into his joy. *Amen.*

SER-

SERMON VI.

PROVERBS vi. 6, 7, 8.

Go to the ant, thou ſluggard; conſider her ways, and be wiſe: which having no guide, overſeer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the ſummer, and gathereth her food in the harveſt.

MAN was created with more underſtanding than the beaſts of the earth: But our minds are ſo debaſed by our apoſtaſy from God, that the meaneſt creatures may become our teachers. And accordingly, the Spirit of God, in the Scriptures, doth frequently ſend us to learn our duty from the example of the beaſts of the field, and of the fowls of heaven. Thus, ingratitude is reproved by the example of thoſe animals which are accounted the moſt ſtupid and untractable, (Iſaiah i. 3.) "The

" ox knoweth his owner, and the aſs his " maſter's crib; but Iſrael doth not know, " my people doth not conſider." An inattention to the conduct of divine Providence, and a neglect of the proper ſeaſons of activity, are in like manner condemned by the example of the fowls of heaven. " The ſtork " knoweth her appointed times, and the tur- " tle, and the crane, and the ſwallow, obſerve " the times of their coming; but my peo- " ple (ſaith God) know not the judgment " of the Lord," (Jerem. viii. 7.) To cure us of exceſſive carefulneſs and anxiety, our Saviour ſends us to " conſider the ravens: " they neither ſow nor reap; they have " neither ſtore-houſe nor barn, yet God " feedeth them; How much more," ſaith he, " are ye better than the fowls?" (Luke xii. 24.). And in my text, to cure us of negligence and ſloth, Solomon ſends us to a creature of the ſmalleſt ſize, but of moſt wonderful activity. " Go to the ant, thou " ſluggard; conſider her ways, and be wiſe: " which having no guide, overſeer, or ruler, " provideth her meat in the ſummer, and " gathereth her food in the harveſt."

In

In diſcourſing on theſe words, I will,

1*ſt*, Conſider the character of the perſon whom the wiſe man here addreſſes.—— And,

2*dly*, The counſel or advice which he gives him; and will then conclude with a practical improvement of the ſubject.

I begin with the character of the perſon to whom this advice is addreſſed. "Go to "the ant," ſaith Solomon, "thou ſlug- "gard:" and the character of the ſluggard is ſo minutely deſcribed in this book, and in the book of Eccleſiaſtes, that any of us may ſoon be acquainted with it.

Solomon obſerves in general, that ſloth caſteth into a deep ſleep; and he repreſents the ſluggard in this ſtate, in the verſes immediately following my text. When it is ſaid to him, "How long wilt thou ſleep, O "ſluggard? when wilt thou ariſe out of "thy ſleep?" inſtead of being affected with the juſt reproach, he begs earneſtly for farther indulgence, "Yet a little ſleeep, a little "ſlumber, a little folding of the hands to "ſleep."—"As the door turneth upon its "hinges,

" hinges, ſo doth the ſlothful man upon his " bed." At length, when ſleep itſelf hath become weariſome, and he hath riſen from his bed, he hath changed his ſituation only to give a new indulgence to his ſloth. " He hideth his hand in his boſom, and will not ſo much as bring it to " his mouth again." He ſpends his time in fruitleſs wiſhes: " The ſoul of the ſluggard " deſireth and hath not." To-morrow is always a day of labour, to-day is always ſpent in idleneſs: And thus " the deſire " of the ſlothful killeth him, becauſe his hands " refuſe to labour." He is diſcouraged by the leaſt oppoſition: " The way of the ſloth- " ful man is as a hedge of thorns." Every difficulty furniſheth him with an excuſe for his idleneſs: " The ſluggard will not plow " by reaſon of the cold." Nay, rather than want an excuſe, he creates imaginary dangers to himſelf: He ſaith, " There is a lion " without, I ſhall be ſlain in the ſtreets." At length, " By much ſlothfulneſs the building " decays, and through the idleneſs of the " hands the houſe droppeth through."—— " His field and his vineyard are grown over " with thorns: nettles cover the face there- " of:

" of: and the ſtone-wall is broken down." Thus, " Poverty cometh upon him like one " that travaileth, and his want as an armed " man, till drowſineſs at laſt clothes him " with rags."

Such is the picture which Solomon draws of the ſluggard; and the features are ſo ſtrongly marked, that there is no room to doubt that it was drawn from the life.

Whether there are perſons in the preſent ſtate of ſociety to whom all the parts of this character agree, is a queſtion which every man will anſwer to himſelf, either from his knowledge or experience. The charge is indeed ſo complex, that it might be difficult perhaps to prove it in its full extent againſt any one individual.

We know well who they are whoſe hands refuſe to labour, who are clothed with rags, and make poverty not only their complaint, but their argument. But though the idle vagrant is plainly deſcribed and condemned by theſe articles, there are other parts of the charge againſt which he might offer a plauſible defence.

He might anſwer to the charge of exceſ-

ſive

ſive ſleep, that he riſeth as early, or at leaſt is as ſoon abroad, as any from whom he can expect an alms: and that he is ſo far from hiding his hand in his boſom, that he ſtretcheth it forth from morning to night, to levy contributions from every paſſenger he ſees. Nay, to ſtrenghten his defence, might he not argue, that as the Preacher was a king, perſons of a higher rank were far more likely to be the objects of his attention, many of whom eat the bread of idleneſs, and labour as little as the beggar? And as he ſpeaks of fields and vineyards, that this ſhows him to have had ſluggards of a ſuperior order in his eye, who originally poſſeſſed ſome property, and held a ſtation above the lower tribes of the people. By this defence, he will certainly elude ſome articles of the charge. Enough, however, will ſtill remain to evince his right to the character in the text. And what he throws off from himſelf, doth not fall to the ground, but will bear hard on the idle and voluptuous in the higher ranks of life. At the ſame time, there are ſome articles in the charge, to which thoſe of a better ſtation would

would no doubt object in their turn. They might attempt to evade the charge of ſluggiſhneſs, by alleging, that though indeed they apply themſelves to no active buſineſs or employment, yet the fatigues of dreſs, of ceremony, and of equipage; the anxieties of gaming, and the attendance on faſhionable amuſements, render the purſuit of pleaſure in the preſent age, as toilſome and laborious as any mechanical employment whatſoever. And that ſo far from being clothed in rags, which Solomon makes the badge of a ſluggard, the fact is, that Solomon himſelf, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of them.

Were this a controverſy of any importance, it would be an eaſy matter to detect the fallacy of theſe reaſonings, and to ſhow, that the defences on both ſides are weak and frivolous. But this would be an idle waſte of time; for as neither of the parties can deny that ſome parts of the deſcription apply to them, it is of little conſequence to which of them the larger ſhare of it belongs.

But ſloth is not confined to the common affairs of life, nor the character of a ſluggard

gard to men in any particular ſtation. There is ſloth in religion, as well as in common life; and the deſcription in my text applies to all, without exception, who, however active and induſtrious in their ſecular employments, neglect the one thing needful, the care of their precious and immortal ſouls.

The laborious mechanic, the buſy merchant, the painful ſtudent, and the buſtling ſtateſman, are all ſluggards in a ſpiritual ſenſe, unleſs they are active in the love and ſervice of the God that made them, and unleſs the advancement of his glory, and the final enjoyment of his favour, are the ends to which all their purſuits are directed.

Here we are only to ſojourn for a ſhort time. Our great Creator hath made us for higher occupations, and better joys, than the preſent world affords us. He hath formed us for the knowledge and enjoyment of himſelf in an eternal and unchangeable ſtate, and hath inſtructed us how we may attain this glorious object of our being. And therefore, however buſy a man may be for himſelf, however induſtrious for his family, however active for the public; yet if all his

views terminate in this preſent life, he is ſtill a ſluggard in the eye of God. For he who labours only for the meat that periſheth, doth as fatally counteract the end of his creation, as he that ſleeps on the bed of ſloth, or as he that fatigues himſelf in purſuing the vain and fugitive pleaſures of this world.—I will add, that even thoſe who have choſen the better part, and who ſeek the kingdom of God and his righteouſneſs in the firſt place, do often incur the imputation of ſluggiſhneſs, by the ommiſſion or careleſs performance of what God hath required of them. For, alas! where is the man who doth "whatſoever his hand find-"eth to do" in the buſineſs of religion, "with "all his might? Where is the man who "ſtrives," as in an agony (for ſo the original word imports) "to enter in at the "ſtrait gate?" or who "gives all diligence "to make his calling and election ſure." We ſee much activity in the purſuits of the world; but a very ſmall portion of it, indeed, in that purſuit which moſt requires and deſerves it.

I may therefore venture to affirm, that there

there is not one in this assembly to whom my text is not addressed in one view or another.——And therefore, without questioning the propriety of the description, let us go on, as was proposed,

Secondly, To consider the counsel or advice which the wise man hath given us: "Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider "her ways, and be wise: which having no "guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her "meat in the summer, and gathereth her "food in the harvest."

He directs us to a creature, indeed, of the most diminutive size and appearance, but whose sagacity and unremitting activity strike the eye of every beholder. The ant instructeth us, not by speech, but by actions: and therefore we are called upon "to consider her *ways*;" how she is employed, and for what ends she is active: not merely that we may gratify our curiosity, or even extend our knowledge of the natural world; but that we may become wiser and better. The wisdom we learn from the ant, is the wisdom of living well:

the wiſdom of acting ſuitably to our ſuperior nature, and our glorious hopes.

There are three very important leſſons which we learn from the conduct of the ant. The

1ſt is a foreſight and ſagacity in making proviſion for the time to come. The ant gathereth more than ſhe hath preſent occaſion for; and in the ſummer and harveſt lays up a ſtore for the approaching winter. Thus ſhe arms herſelf againſt the rigours of the inclement ſeaſon; and whilſt the graſhoppers, that ſung and ſported in the ſummer and harveſt; nay, whilſt many creatures of larger ſize and greater ſtrength, periſh for want of food; ſhe lives on the fruits of her induſtry, and reaps the reward of her care and providence. O that this wiſdom were more common among men! and that we could be perſuaded, while the ſeaſon of action laſts, to "lay up in ſtore for ourſelves "a good foundation againſt the time to "come, while the evil days come not, nor the "years draw nigh, when we ſhall ſay we "have no pleaſure in them." How dreary muſt the winter of life be, when the pre-

vious ſeaſons have been paſſed in ſloth, in idleneſs, or in folly; when the body languiſhes under poverty and wretchedneſs; or when the mind, unfurniſhed with knowledge, and virtue, and faith, and devotion, ſojourns in a crazy tabernacle, tottering to the duſt?—A

2*d* leſſon to be learned from the conduct of the ant is activity and diligence. The ant never intermits her labours as long as the ſeaſon laſts. In ſummer, when the weather is hotteſt, at ſultry noon, as well as in the cool of the morning and of the evening, this buſy creature is continually in motion, either ſeeking her food abroad, or diſpoſing it in her cells at home. Nay, her labours end not with the day, but, as naturaliſts have obſerved, ſhe often takes the benefit of the moon, and plies her work with a ſurpriſing alacrity. Happy were it for man, that he as faithfully employed that precious time which is given him, either to render himſelf uſeful in this world, or to prepare for eternity. Then would he not be ſeen encroaching on the day by ſloth,

nor turning it into night, by intemperance and riot.—The

3*d* leſſon which we learn from the conduct of the ant, is ſagacity in making uſe of the proper ſeaſon for activity. Opportunity is the flower of time; or it is the moſt precious part of it, which if once loſt may never return. This the ant knoweth how to ſeize with admirable ſkill. She goeth forth in queſt of food when it cannot be had with eaſe and certainty: She employs her labour at the time when ſhe knows that it will be effectual. Unlike to man, whoſe folly prompts him to neglect the ſeaſon in which his talents might be uſefully employed, till he hath loſt it for ever; and who ſpends on trifles the day of his merciful viſitation, till the things which belong to his peace are for ever hid from his eyes.

All this foreſight, diligence, and ſagacity, the ant employs by an inſtinct of nature, untutored, and unawed. She hath neither guide, overſeer, nor judge: There is none to go before and mark out her taſk; none to ſuperintend and prompt her to her labour; none to require an account of her

induſtry, or to puniſh her either for her neglect or miſcarriages. This circumſtance the wiſe man mentions with a peculiar emphaſis, on purpoſe to draw the ſluggard's attention to it. For ſurely nothing can be ſuggeſted of greater force and efficacy to rouſe him from his lethargy, and to convince him that his ſloth is not only criminal, but without excuſe,

The ant hath no guide; but we, my brethren, have many guides, " There is a " ſpirit in man, and the inſpiration of the " Almighty giveth them underſtanding." Our Maker hath endued us with reaſonable ſouls, capable of diſcerning betwixt good and evil. He hath favoured us with a complete revelation of his will, and hath ſhowed us " what is good, and what the Lord " our God requireth of us,"—" The law of " the Lord is perfect, converting the ſoul; " the teſtimony of the Lord is ſure, making " wiſe the ſimple." He hath ſent his Son into the world, to ſhow us the path of life, not only by his doctrine, but by his example *too*. And he offers us his Spirit, to lead us into all truth, to open our eyes, and to turn

turn us from darkneſs to light, by taking of the things of Chriſt, and ſhowing them unto us. He hath aſſured us of his willingneſs to aſſiſt and to guide us. "If any man "lack wiſdom, let him aſk it of God, who "giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth "not, and it ſhall be given him." If men therefore are ſluggards, and loiter in their work, they can neither pretend ignorance of their duty, nor the want of a guide to direct them in it.

Again, the ant "hath no overſeer:" but man acts under the immediate inſpection of him, "whoſe eyes are as a flame of fire.—"The eyes of the Lord are in every place, "beholding the evil and the good."—Can any hide himſelf in ſecret "places that I "ſhall not ſee him: do not I fill heaven "and earth, ſaith the Lord."—"Yea the "darkneſs hideth not from thee, O Lord, "but the night ſhineth as the day." Beſides, God hath placed an overſeer in our own breaſts, which acts within us as his deputy; for the voice of conſcience is the voice of God. This boſom-witneſs marks our ſteps, reminds us of our duty, con-

demns us when we do wrong, and never fails to render thoſe unhappy, whom it fails to keep faithful to their duty. For conſcience at firſt ſpeaks forcibly to every human being; and many a hard ſtruggle doth it coſt even the worſt of men, before this awful monitor can be ſilenced. Thus we have not only a guide to point out the way to us, but an overſeer to attend us in every ſtep; and therefore, if we either loiter or turn aſide, we muſt be without excuſe: "Our own hearts condemn us; and God is "greater than our hearts, and knoweth all "things."

Once more, the ant "hath no ruler" or judge, to call her to account for her conduct. But every one of us muſt give an account of himſelf to God. "God hath "appointed a day in which he will judge "the world in righteouſneſs, by that Man "whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath "given aſſurance unto all men, in that he "raiſed him from the dead."——"We "muſt all appear before the judgment-"ſeat of Chriſt, that every one may re-"ceive the things done in the body, ac-"cording

"cording to that he hath done, whether it "be good or bad." And it deſerves our notice, that the ſluggard is particularly pointed out in Scripture as one of thoſe who ſhall certainly be condemned in that deciſive day. This is clearly intimated to us in the parable of the talents. The unprofitable ſervant, who is condemned to utter darkneſs, is not accuſed of having ſquandered his talent, or of having applied it to wicked purpoſes: on the contrary, he had preſerved it entire, and returned it unimpaired to his maſter: his crime was, that he had not improved it. He was a wicked ſervant, becauſe he had not been active for the intereſt of his Lord: he was in ſhort the ſluggard here addreſſed by the wiſe man: and his doom was juſt. For it is only "to thoſe who, by a patient continu-"ance in well-doing, ſeek for glory, ho-"nour, and immortality, that God will "render eternal life, in the day when he "ſhall judge the ſecrets of men by Jeſus "Chriſt."

Thus, then, the ant, which without a guide, overſeer, or judge, labours with ſuch

diligence, ſagacity, and foreſight for the preſervation of a life which muſt ſoon come to a final period; inſtructs, reproves, and condemns thoſe who, having all the advantages which are denied to her, are yet remiſs and negligent in the great buſineſs aſſigned them: on which depend, not their preſent intereſts only, but the intereſts and the life of their immortal ſpirits—of their ſpirits, which ſhall ſurvive the diſſolution of their bodies, and ſhall laſt through eternal ages.

Theſe obſervations may be ſufficient both to illuſtrate the meaning, and to ſhow the propriety of Solomon's advice. Let me now, as the improvement of the ſubject, preſs you to reduce to practice the leſſons which I have been conſidering.—— And for this end, I would repreſent to you,

1*ſt*, That the ſluggard ſins againſt the very nature which God hath given him. For what are all the high powers and faculties with which we are endowed, but ſo many tokens that we were formed for active ſervice? The nature of things has evidently in

in this reſpect the force of a law; ſince it is impoſſible to conceive, that powers and capacities were given us, which were not meant to be exerted and improved. Even in the ſtate of innocence man had his taſk aſſigned him, whilſt the inferior animals were left to roam at large, without being accountable for their conduct. And as our natures are formed for action, ſo our inclination evidently prompts us to it. This is plain from the various methods by which thoſe who will not labour endeavour to relieve themſelves from the oppreſſive load of idleneſs. Their time itſelf is a miſery: and there is nothing ſo impertinent to which they will not fly, that they may be free of it. The burdens of the moſt laborious ſlaves are light, when compared with the burden which the ſluggard carries about with him in an enfeebled body, and a vacant diſcontented mind.

2dly, The ſluggard ſins againſt the manifeſt deſign of Providence. God hath indeed made a liberal proviſion for the ſupply of all our returning wants. But he hath done this in a way that requires induſtry

duſtry on our part, in order to render that proviſion effectual. The earth, by the bleſſing of God, is fruitful of herbs and grain for the uſe of man. But man muſt be careful to do his part in the labour of the field, that it may yield him a regular or a certain produce. The rough materials of all things neceſſary and convenient for the purpoſes of life are laid plentifully at our hands; but the ſkill and induſtry of the workman muſt bring them into form, and render them fit for uſe. "All things are "full of labour." Who then art thou, O ſluggard, to counteract the deſigns both of Nature and of Providence?

But ſome may ſay, perhaps, We have nothing to do. Our wants are abundantly ſupplied from the patrimony which we have inherited; and nothing remains for us but to enjoy what we have. Do ye then indeed believe, that any human being can have a right to live idle on the earth? If ye believe this, ye have yet to learn this fundamental principle of common ſenſe, That all obligations are reciprocal. Ye ſluggards, why cumber ye the ground? Shall

God

God give you all things richly to enjoy, and is there no active ſervice which he requires of you? Muſt the labour of the huſbandman nouriſh, and the art of the manufacturer clothe you? Muſt all ranks of men labour for your convenience; and are there no obligations which ye are bound to diſcharge to them in return for ſo many, and ſo important ſervices? For what end then do you live? Your being is an embarraſſment and burden to the creation. "For if any man will not work, neither "ſhould he eat."——Once more, in the

3*d* place, The ſluggard ſins againſt the great deſign of the Goſpel. For we have not only a Guide to inſtruct us, an Overſeer to obſerve us, and a Judge to whom we are accountable; but we have alſo a great Redeemer, who ſhed his blood for the ranſom of our ſouls, and who gave himſelf for us, not to purchaſe our releaſe from duty, but to "purify unto himſelf a pe-"culiar people, zealous of good works." Chriſt ſpoiled principalities and powers, "that we being delivered out of the hands "of our enemies, might ſerve him without "fear,

" fear, in holineſs and righteouſneſs be-
" fore him all the days of our lives." Let us hear and reverence the language of the Goſpel. " Ye are not your own: ye are
" bought with a price: therefore glorify
" God in your body and in your ſpirit,
" which are God's. Work out your own
" ſalvation with fear and trembling: for it
" is God that worketh in you both to will
" and to do of his good pleaſure. And be-
" ſide this, giving all diligence, add to your
" faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge,
" and to knowledge temperance, and to
" temperance patience, and to patience
" godlineſs, and to godlineſs brotherly kind-
" neſs, and to brotherly kindneſs charity.
" For ſo an entrance ſhall be miniſtered
" unto you abundantly into the everlaſt-
" ing kingdom of our Lord and Saviour
" Jeſus Chriſt."

Let us then be no longer " ſlothful in
" buſineſs, but fervent in ſpirit, ſerving the
" Lord." *Amen.*

SER-

SERMON VII.

JAMES iv. 13, 14, 15.

Go to now, ye that ſay, to-day or to-morrow we will go into ſuch a city, and continue there a year, and buy and ſell, and get gain. Whereas ye know not what ſhall be on the morrow. For what is your life? it is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vaniſheth away. For that ye ought to ſay, If the Lord will, we ſhall live, and do this or that.

THE obvious deſign of this paſſage, is to detect the folly and preſumption of thoſe who lay ſchemes for futurity, without a proper acknowledgement of their dependence on the providence of God. The particular ſcheme, which the Apoſtle repreſents and condemns, is one of the moſt plauſible that can well be imagined. A merchant

merchant reſolves on a journey to ſome city, in which he can carry on his trade to advantage. That he may loſe no time, he ſaith, "To-day," or at fartheſt, "to-morrow, I will go into ſuch a city, and continue there a year, and buy and ſell, and get gain." There is no intimation that he meant to enrich himſelf by fraud or extortion. The gain he had in view may be ſuppoſed to have been the profits of a fair and honourable commerce: the honeſt reward of his attention and diligence.

I apprehend that none of us would be greatly ſtartled, though we ſhould hear ſome of our friends talking in the manner which is here repreſented. There are few of us, perhaps, who have not on ſome occaſions held ſuch a language, without ſuſpecting that it was either preſumptuous or wrong. In order, therefore, to diſcover what is faulty in it, and to enter into the ſpirit of this text, let us examine with attention,

1*ſt*, The form of expreſſion which the Apoſtle condemns.—And,

2*dly*, The amendment which he ſuggeſts.

geſts.—And if it ſhall pleaſe God to afford us the aſſiſtance of his Spirit, I am perſuaded that ſeveral remarks will occur to us in the courſe of this inquiry, which may be "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, "for correction, and for inſtruction in righ-"teouſneſs."—Let us then attend,

Firſt, To the form of expreſſion which the Apoſtle condemns. "Go to now, ye "that ſay, to-day or to-morrow we will go "into ſuch a city, and continue there a "year, and buy and ſell, and get gain."

In general, we may obſerve, that this language relates altogether to a worldly project. The principal object is gain: "not "the true riches;" or "that good part" which ſhall never be taken from thoſe who chooſe it; but the gain of this world, the gain which is acquired by buying and ſelling. They ſay nothing of the meaſure of gain that would ſatisfy them, and nothing of the uſe to which they meant to apply their wealth. For any thing that their expreſſions imply, their deſires might be without bounds, and their ſole aim might be

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to "heap up ſilver as the duſt, and fine "gold as the mire of the ſtreets;" or, in the language of Iſaiah, "to join houſe to houſe, "and field to field, till they were placed "alone in the midſt of the earth."

If this remark is juſt, we have already diſcovered one capital error in the expreſſions before us.—To ſeek gain by honeſt induſtry, either for the ſupply of our own wants, or to enable us to relieve the neceſſities of others, is not only lawful but honourable: But to ſeek wealth for its own ſake, and merely for the ſordid pleaſure of poſſeſſing it, betrays a mean and ſelfiſh ſpirit, unworthy of a man, and much more unworthy of a Chriſtian.

Suppoſing this then to be the end in view, there can be no doubt that it is in a high degree culpable. But as the Apoſtle is ſilent on this head, we ſhall admit, that the perſons who hold the language before us, might intend to make a proper uſe of their riches, and proceed to examine the means by which they propoſe to obtain them. "To-day," ſay they, "or to-morrow, we "will go into ſuch a city."—Theſe words

may paſs in common converſation; but when we ſeriouſly weigh the import of them, as at preſent we are called to do, we ſhall find that they are chargeable both with folly and preſumption.

The great Lord of all has no part in this ſcheme. Theſe little arrogant words, WE WILL, thruſt him out at once, and occupy his place. And for what do the perſons here deſcribed undertake? They undertake without heſitation, to inſure their lives againſt death, their bodies againſt ſickneſs, and their effects againſt every caſualty or hazard. They ſpeak of the morrow, as if they had the abſolute property of it. They promiſe themſelves, that to-morrow they ſhall not only be alive, but in health, to ſet out on their journey; that they ſhall meet with no croſs accidents by the way; that the goods which they carry along with them, ſhall be protected againſt thieves and robbers; and that in due time they they ſhall arrive at the city where their plan of buſineſs is to be carried into execution. But what follows is ſtill more extravagant. They promiſe upon life for a full year; "We will continue there a year:"

and not upon life only, but on health of body, and ſoundneſs of mind, during all that time. No allowance is made for change of climate, or the fatigues of buſineſs: they are always to be in a condition to buy and ſell, and to manage their affairs with activity and prudence. Nay, more, they aſſure themſelves of ſucceſs. "We "will buy and ſell, and get gain." They undertake, not for themſelves alone, but for all whom they ſhall employ, or with whom they ſhall have commerce—that they ſhall have diligent and faithful ſervants; that they ſhall have large profits from thoſe to whom they ſell, and cheap bargains from thoſe of whom they buy. In a word, they ſpeak as if every thing relating to themſelves and others, were ſo dependent on their will, that they might command the events which they deſired, and diſpoſe of all things according to their own pleaſure.

Well might the Apoſtle give this the name of boaſting, as he doth at the 16th verſe of this chapter; and had it ſuited the gravity of an inſpired writer, he might have examined the different parts of the ſcheme,

ſcheme, computed the riſks which were plainly againſt them in every ſtep, and thus turned the whole deſign into matter of contempt and ridicule. But inſtead of this, he arreſts them at their very firſt outſet. You talk of "going to ſuch a city, of continuing "there a year, of buying, of ſelling, and "getting gain:"—"whereas ye know not "what ſhall be on the morrow." The preſent moment is all that ye can call your own. This night your ſouls may be required of you: to-day ye *are;* but to-morrow ye may be numbered with thoſe who *have* been. He would not trifle with miſerable men, who might die whilſt he was ſpeaking to them. He therefore ſeizeth one important truth, the force of which could not be denied, and inſtantly placeth it full in their view. "What is your life?" ſaith he; "it is even a vapour." At preſent it appears; but while I yet ſpeak to you, it may vaniſh away. Ceaſe then, vain boaſters, to talk of a year hence, until ye can ſay ſomething with certainty of the ſucceeding day. Thus the viſionary Babel falls to the ground. This plain propoſition, "Life

" is a vapour," undermines it at once, and overwhelms the proud builders with ſhame.

It hath often given me pleaſure to obſerve, that the truths which are beſt fitted to touch the heart, and to influence the life, are univerſally the moſt ſimple and obvious, and lie ſo near us, that we need only to ſtretch forth our hand to take hold of them. God knows, that we have much work to do, and little time to do it in: and therefore, that we may loſe no part of it, the moſt uſeful and neceſſary things are ſcattered around us with the greateſt profuſion. Were it otherwiſe, the opportunity of acting might frequently paſs away before the means of action were ready. Yet ſuch, alas! is our folly and perverſeneſs, that overlooking what is near, we roam abroad, and always graſp moſt eagerly at thoſe things which are fartheſt from us. Thwarting the merciful deſigns of God, we deſpiſe common truths, merely becauſe they are common; and wander in purſuit of abſtruſe and intricate ſpeculations, which puzzle the underſtanding, and amuſe the fancy, but leave

leave the heart cold and inſenſible. How much better was the courſe which the Apoſtle took with thoſe who held the language of the text, in order to bring them to a ſenſe of their folly? He doth not go about in queſt of remote objects, nor ſeek to ſurpriſe them with new and uncommon diſcoveries: but he ſurpriſed them moſt effectually, by pointing to an object juſt at hand, one view of which was ſufficient to check their preſumption, —an object which ſtood always before their eyes, though overlooked through the pride or inattention or perverſeneſs of their minds.

It hath already been obſerved, that the matter of the project here repreſented by the Apoſtle, is in itſelf plauſible; and that his reproof is chiefly aimed at the form or manner of expreſſing it. And if he treated this with ſo much ſeverity, what would he have ſaid, had the end propoſed been criminal in its own nature, or the means of obtaining it baſe and diſhonourable? What would he have ſaid to thoſe who puzzle themſelves with ſchemes to get rid of their money, or to throw it away upon the moſt

ridiculous trifles? who have no higher objects than the ſuperfluities of dreſs, the luxury of entertainments, the multiplicity of diverſions, and all the expenſive arts of diſſipation and ſenſuality? What would he have ſaid to thoſe who, in the ſame preſumptuous ſtyle, lay deliberate ſchemes for low vice and debauchery, for drunkenneſs and whoredom, and other works of the fleſh? What would he have ſaid to thoſe who deviſe methods of making gain by ſecret fraud or open violence? to thoſe who practiſe deceit in buying and ſelling, or who without either buying or ſelling ſupport a uſeleſs and pernicious life by the baſe and infamous occupation of gaming? Compared with theſe, the ſcheme which the Apoſtle condemns is wiſdom, and honour, and virtue.

But the Apoſtle doth not reſt in cenſuring what was wrong. He goes on at the 15th verſe to correct what was faulty, and to ſupply what was defective. "For that "ye ought to ſay," adds he, "If the Lord "will, we ſhall live, and do this or that." —This amendment ſuggeſted by the Apoſtle, was the

Second

Second thing which I propoſed to conſider.—And,

1*ſt*, It furniſheth us with a rule by which all our undertakings ought to be examined. Whatever ſcheme we have in view, to which we cannot prefix this preface, "if "the Lord will," we may be aſſured is eſſentially wrong, and ought to be abandoned without delay. There is nothing truly good or profitable to us, for which we may not addreſs God by prayer. Let us then convert the views which we have in any undertaking into the form of a petition, and try whether we can, with decency or propriety, offer up ſuch a petition to God. Let us conſider, whether the means by which we propoſe to compaſs theſe views are of ſuch a nature, that we may aſk or expect the divine bleſſing to accompany them. Happy were it for us, that all our ſchemes and projects were brought to this teſt. We ſhould then be ſeaſonably delivered from that fatal enchantment which firſt engageth us in unlawful purſuits, and then ſtimulates us to perſiſt in them againſt the remonſtrances of our own conſciences.

We ſhould then eſcape from thoſe fatal ſnares into which our raſh unadviſed plans betray us. For who would dare to ſay, "If the Lord will, I ſhall live," and rob and ſteal, game and defraud, oppreſs and over-reach my neighbour? Such a connection of thought would ſtartle the mind at the very firſt conception of luſt, before it had brought forth ſin. And I am perſuaded, that if men were faithfully to practiſe this one eaſy and reaſonable precaution, they would at leaſt avoid many of thoſe preſumptuous offences, which lay waſte the conſcience, and deſtroy the peace of the ſoul.

2*dly*, This amendment, which the Apoſtle ſuggeſts, teacheth us to conſider the ſhortneſs, and particularly the uncertainty of life. "Ye know not," ſaith he, "what "ſhall be on the morrow. For what is "your life? it is even a vapour which ap-"peareth for a little time, and then vaniſh-"eth away." Thus David deſcribes the life of man by thoſe things which are moſt frail and fugitive in nature. "As for man, his

" his days are as graſs." Nay, as if the graſs, which endures for a ſeaſon, were too permanent an object of compariſon, he immediately corrects the ſimilitude, " As the " flower of the field, ſo he flouriſheth:"— As the flower of the field, which is expoſed to the foot of every paſſenger, to the tooth of every wild beaſt, to the wanton hand of every deſtroyer. It is not by rare and ſtriking events only, that the thread of life may be broken. There is no need that the thunder ſhould break on you, or that the fire ſhould devour you, or that the earth ſhould open and ſwallow you up. Things far more common and familiar are ſufficient for ſo eaſy a purpoſe, as that of cutting off your days. There is not an element ſo friendly, nor a circumſtance ſo trifling, that it may not become the miniſter of death. Ought not this manifeſt uncertainty of life, then, to cool our purſuit of earthly projects? We are apt to meditate great and complicated ſchemes to attain wealth, or power, or honour in the world. But could we penetrate a little into futurity,

we might perhaps ſee our grave opened far on this ſide of half way to the objects of our keeneſt purſuit. " For what is our life? " it is even a vapour that appeareth for a " little time, and then vaniſheth away. For " that we ought to ſay, If the Lord will, " we ſhall live, and do this or that."

3*dly*, This amendment ſuggeſted by the Apoſtle, teacheth us to live in an habitual dependence on God, not only for life, but alſo for activity and prudence to carry our lawful deſigns into execution. There are two aſſertions in the 10th chapter of the book of Proverbs, which have a ſeeming oppoſition to each other. At the 4th verſe, it is ſaid, that " the hand of the diligent " maketh rich;" where it would appear, that proſperity, in our worldly callings, is to be aſcribed to our own activity and ſkill. On the other hand, it is aſſerted at the 22d verſe, that " the bleſſing of the Lord, it ma- " keth rich; and he addeth no ſorrow with " it." Theſe two aſſertions are not oppoſed; but the one is ſubordinate to the other; and the meaning is, that the hand of the diligent, by the bleſſing of God, is the means of

of gaining wealth and honour. Accordingly, we find that God gave this caution to his ancient people. "Beware that thou ſay "not in thine heart, when thy herds and "thy flocks multiply, and thy ſilver and "thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou "haſt is multiplied, My power, and the "might of my hand hath gotten me this "wealth. But thou ſhalt remember the "Lord thy God, for it is he that giveth "thee power to get wealth." How often do we ſee the beſt laid ſchemes miſcarry; while others, far leſs flattering, ſucceed in a wonderful manner? One man ſhall toil with inceſſant induſtry, riſe early, and ſit up late, and eat the bread of carefulneſs, and yet all in vain. Another, who, compared with this man, had neither a head to contrive, nor hands to execute, ſhall proſper in all his plans. "I returned, and ſaw un-"der the ſun, that the race is not to the "ſwift, nor the battle to the ſtrong; nei-"ther yet bread to the wiſe, nor yet riches "to men of underſtanding, nor yet favour "to men of ſkill; but time and chance hap-"peneth to them all." Men are too apt

to

" to ſacrifice to their own net, and to burn " incenſe to their own drag." In great mercy, therefore, God denies riches to thoſe who may be ſaid to live for no other end but to obtain them; while, on the other hand, they ſometimes drop, as it were, into the lap of others, who have no talents and little anxiety to acquire them. Theſe obſervations are not meant to diſcourage induſtry or ſkill in the management of our lawful buſineſs. For it is ſtill true, notwithſtanding what hath been ſaid, that wiſdom excelleth folly, as much as light excelleth darkneſs; and that without proper means being uſed, we have no title to expect the bleſſing of God upon our affairs. But they ought to teach us to " commit our " ways unto God," in well doing, to truſt alſo in him that he may bring it to paſs, to " acknowledge him in all our ways, that he " may direct our ſteps."—In the

4*th* and *laſt* place, This amendment, ſuggeſted by the Apoſtle, teacheth us to reſign ourſelves entirely to the will of God, and to ſubmit all our ſchemes to him, to proſper or to diſappoint them as ſeemeth good to him.

him. This is the true ſpirit of the text. " If " the Lord will, we ſhall live and do this or " that." Reſignation to the will of God frees the mind from a grievous bondage, the bondage of earthly purſuits and expectations. Whatever God wills, is pleaſing to the reſigned ſoul: and when a Chriſtian hath, by prayer and ſupplication, made known his requeſts to God, then the peace of God which paſſeth all underſtanding keeps his heart and mind through Jeſus Chriſt. Then only is life truly enjoyed, when we reliſh its comforts, at the ſame time that we are prepared to part with them. The anxieties of the worldly man torment him with the pangs of a thouſand deaths. His ſoul dies within him as often as he conceives the apprehenſion of loſing thoſe good things which he would wiſh always to enjoy. Whereas he who hath reſigned his will to the will of God, " eats his bread with " joy, and drinks his wine with a merry " heart." Even the thought of his dying hour throws no damp on the joys of his mind. From the contemplation of God's goodneſs to him in life, he can paſs without terror

terror or amazement to the thought of his protection in the dark valley and ſhadow of death. Even in that gloomy paſſage, he fears no evil; but commits himſelf to the Lord his Shepherd, who will make goodneſs and mercy to follow him all the days of his life, and at laſt will bring him to dwell in his houſe above for ever.

Theſe are ſome of the inſtructions which we may derive from the amendment here ſuggeſted by the Apoſtle: "For that ye "ought to ſay, If the Lord will, we ſhall live "and do this or that."

From what hath been ſaid, let us learn, in the

1ſt place, To guard againſt that extravagance in laying down ſchemes for the time to come, which, upon cool reflection, appears ſo unjuſtifiable in the example before us. Had the perſons here deſcribed, upon finding it inconvenient to ſet out immediately, aſked themſelves this queſtion, What aſſurance have we of another day? this might have given them a timely check. But their imagination having taken poſ-

ſeſſion of the morrow, it carried them forward without the leaſt interruption, brought them ſafe to the end of their journey, fixed their reſidence, tranſacted their buſineſs, and reaped the profits of the whole enſuing year. One preſumptuous ſtep leads on to another. The firſt object is near, and appears to be within our reach: but if we aſſure ourſelves of poſſeſſing that before it actually becomes ours, then we ſee another object a little farther on, which appears as near to it again; afterwards a third but a little beyond that: and thus we proceed ſtep by ſtep, till we have paſſed the utmoſt bounds of probability, before we begin to ſuſpect that we have gone any length at all. Let us then, in the

2*d* place, Realize this awful and important truth, That our life is but "a vapour, "which appeareth for a little time, and then "vaniſheth away." Die we muſt, and we know not how ſoon. Our worldly enjoyments muſt be relinquiſhed, our worldly plans and projects muſt periſh. "The "wind ſhall paſs over us, and we ſhall be "gone, and our place ſhall know us no "more."

"more." Nature will look as gay on the day of our deceaſe as it ever did; the buſineſs of the world will go on as briſkly as before; our habitations will make our ſucceſſors as welcome as they made us; and even our names, in a few years, ſhall periſh as if we had never been. What wiſe man, then, would build his houſe on ſuch unſtable ſand? How wretched muſt that man be, whoſe inheritance lies wholly upon earth? What pangs muſt he feel at the parting hour? with what horror muſt he hear the ſummons of diſſolution?

Let us then be perſuaded to raiſe our affections above the things of the earth to thoſe things which are above. Let us plan for eternity, and let us chooſe the unchangeable God for our portion. Knowing that we have here no continuing city, let us ſeek one to come; a city which hath foundations whoſe builder and maker is God. Let the Lord Jeſus be our leader and guardian; under his conduct let us preſently ſet out for the heavenly Jeruſalem; and in due time he will bring us ſafe to the city of the great and univerſal King, where we ſhall con-

continue, not for a year only, but for ever; and where we ſhall get poſſeſſion of ſubſtantial gain, even that glorious inheritance of the ſaints in light, which is incorruptible, and undefiled, and which fadeth not away. *Amen.*

SERMON VIII.

EXODUS xx. 8.

Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.

THE too general and growing abuſe of the Chriſtian Sabbath muſt render a diſcourſe on this ſubject both ſeaſonable and neceſſary; and I propoſe therefore, in dependence on divine aid,

1*ſt*, To inquire how far the precept in this text is binding on us.

2*dly*, To ſhow how this commandment ought to be kept or obſerved. And,

3*dly*, To enforce the obſervance of it by ſome motives and arguments.

Firſt, I begin with inquiring how far this precept of keeping holy the Sabbath day is binding on us.

Although your ſtated attendance on this day,

day, for the worſhip of God, may be interpreted as a public declaration on your part, that you reckon this commandment binding on you, yet the inquiry I have propoſed is by no means ſuperfluous. We are exhorted in Scripture, not only "to ſanctify "the Lord God in our hearts," but likewiſe "to be always ready to give an anſwer "to every man who aſketh us a reaſon of "the hope that is in us." And if we ſhould at all times be ready to declare the grounds of our hope, we ſhould certainly be at leaſt equally ready to explain and to juſtify the reaſons of our practice. Beſides, although in the judgment of charity, "which thinketh no evil," your weekly attendance on this day for public worſhip may be ſuppoſed to flow from a religious principle; yet in our preſent ſituation, it is eaſy to conceive, that ſomething elſe than a ſenſe of duty may occaſion our meeting together in this manner. The laws of our country not only permit, but require, the obſervance of the Chriſtian Sabbath: ſo that human authority, the manner of our education, a regard to decency, or even mo-

tives inferior to any of theſe, may bring people to church who have never ſeen themſelves to be bound by any divine law, to keep holy the Sabbath day. And I am ſorry to add, that there is too great cauſe to ſuſpect this to be the caſe with many who frequent our religious aſſemblies, from their defective and partial obſervance of this holy day. I therefore judge it to be of the higheſt importance, to ſet the authority of this precept in a clear and ſtriking light. For untill we view the Sabbath as a divine inſtitution, we ſhall never either pay to it that regard which it deſerves, nor reap any ſpiritual advantage from the moſt exact outward obſervance of it.—I ſuppoſe it will not be denied, in the

1*ſt* place, That ſome part of our time ſhould be employed in the immediate worſhip of God. Reaſon muſt neceſſarily teach us, that ſuch homage is due that almighty Being on whom we depend for life, and breath, and all things. In order to ſecure the regular performance of this worſhip, the ſame principle of reaſon will naturally ſuggeſt the propriety of allotting certain ſtated

ſtated ſeaſons for that purpoſe. If any ſhall diſpute the neceſſity of this, they will at leaſt allow us to affirm the expediency of it: for it is a common and true obſervation, that what is left to be done at any time, is in great danger of being done at no time.—I may likewiſe take it for granted, in the

2*d* place, That the right of determining what proportion of time, or what ſtated ſeaſons ſhould be employed in divine worſhip, will be readily admitted to belong to God. This is ſo evident, that it ſcarcely needs an illuſtration. If we can live one moment independent of God, we may call that moment our own, and claim the diſpoſal of it. But if we cannot draw one breath without his aid; if his conſtant viſitation is neceſſary to preſerve us; the conſequence is unavoidable, that the whole of our time is due to God, and that his right is abſolute to reſerve any part of it which he pleaſeth for his own worſhip.—And this leads me to obſerve, in the

3*d* place, That God hath actually interpoſed his authority in this matter; and by a clear and poſitive law, part of which I

have now read to you, hath reſerved for himſelf one day in ſeven; that he hath conſecrated or ſet apart this portion of our time, by his precept, example, and bleſſing, for a holy reſt or ceſſation from ſecular employments, and for ſuch acts of religious worſhip and adoration, as creatures owe to their great Creator.

It is confeſſed by all who admit the inſpiration of the Old Teſtament, that this law was ſtrictly binding upon the Jews, to whom it was delivered by the miniſtry of Moſes. But ſome have made it a queſtion, whether it continues to be binding under the Chriſtian diſpenſation. We maintain that it is ſtill in force, in as much as it contains a declaration of the will of God, that one day in ſeven, or the ſeventh part of our time, ſhould be ſeparated from common uſe, and dedicated to religious purpoſes. With regard to the particular day to be obſerved, all days being alike in themſelves, the appointment of it muſt be of a poſitive nature, and may therefore be varied at the pleaſure of the Lawgiver. Accordingly we find, that in this circumſtance the law hath received

ceived an alteration. The ſeventh, or laſt day of the week, is now become common; and in commemoration of our Saviour's reſurrection from the dead, the holy reſt is transferred to the firſt day of the week; which hath ever ſince been called, by way of eminence, *The* LORD's *Day*. Whether this remarkable change is ſufficiently ſupported by divine authority, admits of farther inquiry. What I have hitherto ſaid, is only intended to prove our obligation to keep one day in ſeven holy to the Lord; and for this, I think, I have given you very ſatisfying evidence. It is a natural principle, that God ought to be worſhipped; and as it is highly neceſſary to ſecure the performance of ſuch an important duty, reaſon farther teacheth us, that ſome ſtated times ought to be ſet apart for that end. The right of determining theſe doth certainly belong to God himſelf; and he hath actually been pleaſed to give a plain intimation of his will in this matter, claiming, by a diſtinct and peremptory ſtatute, one whole day in ſeven, for the peculiar exerciſes of religious worſhip. Thus far, then, the commandment

is ſtrictly moral; and therefore ſtill binding upon us, in as much as it only enjoins a natural duty, and preſcribes the moſt effectual means for ſecuring the performance of it.

Having eſtabliſhed this point, the way lies more open to the other ſubject of inquiry; and I expect to find leſs difficulty in ſatisfying you about the alteration of the day. Some Chriſtians, indeed, have maintained, that both days ought to be kept; but I reckon there will be no need to guard you againſt a miſtake of this kind. You will eaſily convince yourſelves that there is but one Sabbath in the week.

As to our practice in obſerving the firſt, inſtead of the laſt day of the week, which was the Jewiſh Sabbath, the reaſons of it may be reduced under theſe following heads.

1*ſt*, We learn from Scripture, that this was the day on which the Apoſtles and primitive Chriſtians held their ſolemn aſſemblies for the public exerciſes of religious worſhip. Thus we read, Acts xx. 7. that "upon the firſt day of the week, when the "diſciples came together to break bread,"

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i. e. to celebrate the ſacrament of our Lord's ſupper, "Paul preached unto them, and "continued his ſpeech until midnight:" where it is obſervable, that their meeting together on that preciſe day is not ſpoken of as a thing extraordinary, or merely occaſional, but as a ſtated and ordinary practice. It was their cuſtom ſo to do; and Paul being on the ſpot, met with them, and preſided in their aſſembly. It farther appears, that this was the day on which they laid up their public charity, and contributed for the relief of their needy brethren; and this by an expreſs apoſtolical injunction. For thus Paul writes to the Corinthians, 1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2. "Now concerning the collection for the "ſaints, as I have given order to the "churches of Galatia, even ſo do ye. Up-"on the firſt day of the week, let every one "of you lay by him in ſtore, as God hath "proſpered him, that there be no gathering "when I come." In this paſſage, there is not only a practice of the church deſcribed, but likewiſe the appointment of an inſpired Apoſtle, ratifying and confirming it. For if the words extend to the religious obſervance

vance of that particular day, then we have a plain ſcriptural command for our warrant: or if they refer only to the collecting alms on that day, which is the loweſt ſenſe that they will bear, they neceſſarily imply, that this was a weekly holy day then in uſe, on which Chriſtians ceaſed from their worldly buſineſs, and met together for the ſocial worſhip of God: that the Apoſtle juſtified and approved of this practice, and thereby teſtified his opinion that it was perfectly agreeable to the will of Chriſt.

Beſides, we find that this day was, in the earlieſt times, diſtinguiſhed by the title of the *Lord's day;* for this appears from Rev. i. 10. where John informs the churches, that he "was in the Spirit on the Lord's day;"—that well-known day, ſacred to the memory of the Lord Redeemer;—the day on which he triumphed over death, and which he dignified, by his reſurrection, above all other days. From theſe circumſtances taken together, it appears, that this change took place in the apoſtolic age; and that the firſt day of the week was then eſteemed holy to the Lord, and ſeparated from the reſt for religious pur-

purpoſes: ſo that though we cannot find any expreſs command, appointing the alteration in ſo many words; yet we have the moſt convincing evidence, that it was either part of the inſtruction which Chriſt gave to his diſciples before his aſcenſion, when he was ſeen of them forty days, as the ſacred hiſtory informs us, and ſpake of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God; or elſe that it was afterwards enacted by the Apoſtles, in virtue of their authority derived from Chriſt, and under the infallible direction of his bleſſed Spirit.

2*dly*, There appear to be many great and weighty reaſons for ſuch a change. Under the Old Teſtament, the ſeventh day was kept holy in memory of the creation, becauſe on that day God reſted from all his works: and is it not equally reaſonable and fit, that the firſt day ſhould be ſanctified under the goſpel diſpenſation, ſeeing on that day the great God and our Saviour reſted from all the labours of his ſuffering ſtate, and roſe from the dead, in teſtimony that man's redemption was fully accompliſhed. Surely the renovation of the world, after ſin had

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in a manner broken it in pieces, is a work as glorious and divine as the firſt creation of it, and as worthy to be gratefully remembered by us.

3*dly*, It is of ſome moment to obſerve, that this day has been uniformly kept as the Chriſtian Sabbath, from the apoſtolic age down to this preſent time. This fact is proved by the concurring teſtimony of hiſtorians in all the different periods of the church. At the ſame time, they tell us what hot diſputes aroſe about other matters, particularly about the inſtitution and obſervance of holy days. We find the Eaſtern and Weſtern churches ſo divided with regard to the time of keeping Eaſter, as to proceed to excommunicate each other: but we hear of no controverſy about obſerving the firſt day of the week; for in this they were all agreed. Now, what could have produced ſuch perfect uniformity, eſpecially in thoſe ages, when there was no Chriſtian magiſtrate to interpoſe his authority, but a clear conviction, and a well-grounded belief, that this was really a divine inſtitution de-

delivered by Chriſt, or his Apoſtles, to the church?—Once more, in the

4*th* place, God hath remarkably hallowed this day, by many acts of grace done to his people, when employed in the religious obſervance of it. On this day, when "the "diſciples were all with one accord in one "place," the Spirit of God deſcended upon them, inſomuch that they were filled with the Holy Ghoſt, to their own unſpeakable comfort, and the admiration of all who ſaw and heard them. On the ſame day, "the "arm of the Lord was" glorioufly "re-"vealed," in the converſion of three thouſand ſouls, who were brought from a ſtate of enmity to Chriſt into the boſom of the church, by the plain and powerful preaching of the Apoſtle Peter. On this day John was inſpired with the ſpirit of prophecy, and had viſible repreſentations of the various revolutions in the church of Chriſt, down to the final conſummation of all things. And in latter times God hath ſignally bleſſed his people when met together on this holy day; making all his goodneſs to paſs before them, and giving them ſuch views

views of his power and glory in the ſanctuary, that they have been obliged to ſay with Jacob at Bethel, " This is no other " than the houſe of God, and this is the gate " of heaven;" a foretaſte of the everlaſting Sabbath, an earneſt of that reſt which remains for the people of God. And is it to be ſuppoſed, that the holy and righteous Governor of the world would countenance his creatures in a ſuperſtition of their own contrivance, to the open and weekly neglect of a plain and poſitive law? No ſurely: Theſe tokens of the Divine preſence and favour diſpenſed on this day, are ſure indications that this is the day which God himſelf hath made, and which he hath ſeparated, by his authority, for the Chriſtian Sabbath.

Thus have I finiſhed the firſt thing propoſed in this diſcourſe; which was to inquire how far the precept in the text is binding on us: and I hope I have ſaid enough to ſatisfy every unprejudiced mind, that it is ſtill in force, as to the great ſcope and deſign of it: and that the change of the day, which is only circumſtantial, bears

bears ſuch evident marks of divine authority, as ſufficiently juſtify the uniform opinion, and uninterrupted practice, of all the Chriſtian churches.——I proceed now to the

Second thing propoſed, Which was to ſhow how this commandment ought to be kept or obſerved. "Remember the Sabbath day "to keep it holy."

This, as it is the firſt, ſo it is likewiſe the principal and moſt important branch of the precept. Nay, the full ſcope and deſign of the law is probably expreſſed in theſe few ſignificant words. For I cannot help thinking, that the bodily reſt or ceſſation from labour, which is afterwards enjoined, derives its chief value from its ſubſerviency to thoſe ſpiritual exerciſes by which the Sabbath is moſt eminently ſanctified; and that it ought principally to be conſidered as a deſcription of the means to aid us in the duties of religious worſhip. I think it proper to mention this diſtinction, becauſe ſome have contended, that reſting from labour is all that is meant by keeping holy

ly the Sabbath: but ſurely it cannot be thought that God, who is a pure and holy Spirit, would deliver a law with ſuch ſolemnity, for ſo mean and low a purpoſe as this. He who ſo frequently declares, that the rites and ceremonies of his own appointment were no farther acceptable to him than as they repreſented ſpiritual bleſſings, and were improved for promoting internal purity, cannot be ſuppoſed to take pleaſure in mere inactivity, or to have appointed a weekly day of reſt, ſolely for the indulgence of the body. Beſides, this expreſſion of *ſanctifying* or *keeping holy*, not only imports a ſeparation from common uſe, but likewiſe a conſecration to a ſacred or a religious uſe. In this ſenſe it is always employed in the Old Teſtament, either when it is applied to the perſons of the prieſts, or to veſſels of the ſanctuary; and no reaſon can be given why it ſhould be taken in a lower ſenſe here, or why it ſhould import any thing leſs than that the day is ſet apart for the ſervice of God, and ought to be employed in the duties of religious worſhip.—I ſhall, in the

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1*ſt* place, Give you a general account of theſe duties. And then we ſhall ſee more clearly, in the

2*d* place, What things ought to be avoided by us, as inconſiſtent with the ſcope and deſign of this commandment.

In general, then, we are bound to ſanctify this day, by aſſembling together for the public worſhip of God, that as many as can conveniently meet in one place may join in paying homage to their common Lord; and thus contribute their endeavours to make him glorious in the eyes of the world around them. For this we ought to prepare ourſelves, by the more private exerciſes of family-worſhip. And, becauſe our hearts are naturally indiſpoſed for ſuch divine and heavenly employments, it is both reaſonable and neceſſary, that each perſon apart ſhould ſpend a competent time in reading and meditating on the word of God, and implore his preſence and his bleſſing, by humble prayer, in the ſecret retirements of the cloſet. It will alſo be of conſiderable uſe, to render theſe ſeveral kinds of religious worſhip more beneficial to us,

that, when occaſion offers, we ſhould diſcourſe together on divine ſubjects, in order to increaſe our knowledge of ſpiritual things, and to fix upon our minds a more lively ſenſe of God and of our duty.

1ſt, I ſay, We are bound to ſanctify this day, by a punctual and devout attendance upon the public ordinances of religion, aſſembling together in the name of the Lord, to offer up the ſacrifices of prayer and praiſe; to hear his word explained and applied; and eſpecially to partake, as often as we have opportunity, of the holy ſacrament of the Lord's ſupper, the memorial of our Saviour's death, and the pledge of his ſecond coming. In ſuch duties as theſe, did the people of God in former times chiefly employ themſelves on the holy Sabbath. Under the old diſpenſation, ſacrifices were offered, and incenſe burnt in the temple, and the law was publicly read and explained, both at Jeruſalem and other cities of Judea, where ſynagogues were built for that very end. After the reſurrection of Chriſt, the Apoſtles and primitive Chriſtians met together ſtatedly on the firſt day of the week,

week, that they might join in celebrating that great and propitious event, and in performing other acts of ſocial religion. And ought not we to ſanctify the Lord's day in the ſame manner? We are bleſſed with the ordinances of the goſpel regularly, and, I hope, purely diſpenſed. We have places ſet apart for public worſhip, and are countenanced in the exerciſe of it by lawful authority; and therefore it muſt diſcover a ſtrange perverſeneſs of temper, and an unpardonable contempt both of God and man, to withdraw from the place of public worſhip, and, on any pretence whatſoever, to refuſe to bear a part in ſuch a becoming and rational ſervice.—But,

2*dly*, That the public worſhip may have a greater efficacy, and that our minds may be better diſpoſed to enter into it, it is the duty of each family apart to ſpend ſome time both before and after the public ſervice, in reading the Holy Scriptures, and in joining together in prayer and thankſgiving to God. Were this practiſed in a ſerious and devout manner, we might expect to ſee better days, and more fruitful and joyful

Sabbaths than any we have yet ſeen. A congregation compoſed of a number of holy families, juſt come from converſing with God at home, to worſhip him together in the houſe of prayer, would be indeed a lovely ſight, and could not fail to be honoured with the ſpecial marks of divine favour. We have ſome illuſtrious examples of family-religion recorded in the Old Teſtament: but what chiefly ought to engage the attention of Chriſtians, is, that our bleſſed Lord himſelf was pleaſed to become a pattern to us in this matter. In the intervals of his public work, we find him frequently retiring with his little family, praying with them, and teaching them to pray, and inſtructing them in things pertaining to the kingdom of God; in this, as in all other things, leaving us an example that we ſhould follow his ſteps. Family-religion, therefore, a duty incumbent on us at all times, muſt be in a very peculiar manner ſeaſonable and neceſſary on the holy Sabbath. It deſerves our notice, too, that this command is particularly addreſſed to heads of families; and as they are expreſs-

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ly enjoined to ſuffer nothing to be done by any under their inſpection, which is inconſiſtent with the due obſervance of the Sabbath, this injunction plainly implies, that, in their ſtation and character, they ought to employ their natural authority, as well as every other means, to promote the great ends of this holy commandment.—I added, in the

3*d* place, That as our hearts are naturally indiſpoſed for ſpiritual exerciſes, we ought each of us, by ourſelves, to make conſcience of the ſecret duties of the cloſet. There we ought to meditate on the marvellous works of God; on his glorious perfections, as they are diſplayed to us, in creation, providence, and redemption; above all, on that great "myſtery of godlineſs, "God manifeſt in the fleſh, juſtified in the "Spirit, ſeen of angels, preached unto the "Gentiles, believed on in the world, re-"ceived up into glory." In this ſacred retirement, we ought to revolve in our minds the various ſteps of our Lord's humiliation, from his birth at Bethlehem to his burial on Mount Calvary. Thence we ſhould proceed to view the triumphs of his croſs,

where he bruiſed the old ſerpent's head, "finiſhed tranſgreſſion, made reconciliation "for iniquity, and brought in everlaſting "righteouſneſs." To confirm our faith, and increaſe our joy, our meditations ought to follow this mighty Conqueror, and to contemplate him breaking the bands of death, and riſing from the grave on this firſt day of the week, aſcending up to heaven in the ſight of his diſciples, and ſitting on the right hand of God the Father; from whence he ſhall come in power and great glory, to judge the world in rghteouſneſs, according to this goſpel which is now preached in his name. When, by ſuch meditations as theſe, our hearts are warmed and enlivened, we ſhould then with all humility and reverence approach the throne of grace: imploring thoſe mercies which we need for ourſelves, and begging a divine bleſſing to accompany the outward means of grace, that, with our fellow-worſhippers, we may be made to taſte of the fatneſs of his houſe, and may find his ordinances to be indeed the wiſdom and the power of God, "the ſavour of life unto "life," to our ſouls.—The

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4*th* and *laſt* particular which I mentioned, is mutual conference upon divine things. This is of great uſe to make the truths of religion plain and familiar to us. It ſtirs up our affections, and makes our knowledge more lively and more operative, both on our hearts and lives. It confirms and ſtrengthens our faith, and brings much joy and comfort to our ſouls, by ſhowing us, that as face anſwereth to face in water, ſo doth the heart of one true Chriſtian to that of another. In this exerciſe holy men of old have employed themſelves, and met with ſingular tokens of divine favour and acceptance. At no time ſurely can ſuch conference be more ſeaſonable than on the Chriſtian Sabbath: and it is owing probably to the neglect of this, that the preaching of the word, and other parts of public religious ſervice, are ſo generally fruitleſs and unſucceſsful. I have thus given you a general account of the manner in which the Sabbath ought to be ſanctified. In the next diſcourſe, I ſhall conſider the prohibitory part of the commandment, and endeavour to enforce the obſervance of it by ſome motives and arguments.

SERMON IX.

EXODUS xx. 8.

Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy.

[The 2d Sermon on this Text.]

I HAVE already endeavoured to prove, that we are ſtrictly bound by this divine precept to keep one day in ſeven holy to the Lord; and that the change of the Sabbath, from the ſeventh to the firſt day of the week, on which our Lord roſe from the dead, bears ſuch evident ſignatures of divine authority, as are ſufficient to juſtify the uniform opinion, and uninterrupted practice, of all the Chriſtian churches in this matter. I have alſo endeavoured to explain the commandment itſelf, and to give you an account of the manner in which the Sabbath ought to be ſanctified.——I now proceed to conſider the prohibitory part of the com-

commandment, and to enforce the obſervance of it, by ſome motives and arguments.

The prohibition chiefly reſpects bodily labour. "The Sabbath-day is the Sabbath "of the Lord thy God," ſaith the Supreme Lawgiver; "in it thou ſhalt not do any work." It is expreſſed, you ſee, in very ſtrong and abſolute terms, and was for a long time underſtood by the Jews in a very rigid ſenſe, in ſo much that they thought it even unlawful to defend their lives when they were attacked by their enemies on that day. So univerſally did this opinion prevail among them in the beginning of the wars of the Maccabees, that, in ſome inſtances, it proved fatal to many of them. But this was afterward, by the univerſal conſent of the learned in their law, declared to be a miſtake: and indeed, from the deſign of the precept, from other paſſages of Scripture, and eſpecially from our Saviour's inſtruction and example, it appears, that ſome kinds of work are perfectly conſiſtent with the reſt which is here enjoined. Of this nature are works of neceſſity, *i. e.* works which

which cannot be done the day before, nor delayed till the day following. Thus, for inſtance, ſhould a fire break out on the Sabbath, we may and ought to uſe every mean to extinguiſh it. Should our enemies attack us, it is lawful to reſiſt them: if we are at a diſtance from church, we may travel as far as is neceſſary, in order to hear the word of God, and to join with others in public worſhip. For, as our Saviour tells us, "The Sabbath was made for man, and "not man for the Sabbath;" and the means are never to be ſet above the end; nor is reſting on the Sabbath to be interpreted ſo as to exclude the religious employment of it.

In like manner, works of charity and compaſſion are lawful on this day. Our Lord wrought many miracles of mercy on the Sabbath, and vindicated his conduct againſt thoſe who found fault with him, by ſuch maxims as plainly ſhow, that offices of charity are not only allowable but praiſe-worthy, and are perfectly conſiſtent with the reſt which is here enjoined.

But then it is abſolutely unlawful to purſue

ſue our worldly buſineſs on this day; becauſe this thwarts the great end and deſign of the commandment, which ordains the ſeventh part of our time to be ſtatedly employed in the immediate ſervice of God, that we may thereby become better acquainted with him, and may become more fit for an eternal communion with him in heaven. The very intention of the law is to ſet apart a certain proportion of our time for the care of our ſouls; which, amidſt the hurry of our ſecular affairs, we are too apt to neglect.

To apply ourſelves therefore to our ordinary buſineſs on the Sabbath, to talk of it, or even to ſpend our thoughts on it, is doing what we can to fruſtrate the gracious deſigns of the Lawgiver, and muſt neceſſarily be of infinite hurt and prejudice to our ſouls. And if our worldly employments, which are not only lawful, but even neceſſary on other days of the week, are criminal on this day, you will eaſily perceive, that ſports and recreations muſt certainly be conſidered as included in the prohibition: for theſe are ſtill more oppoſite to the proper buſineſs of the Sabbath,

Sabbath, and have not the remoteſt pretence either to neceſſity or uſefulneſs. To have recourſe to amuſements on this day, is wantonly to throw away our time, without any advantage; and carries in it a plain declaration, that we have no reliſh for ſpiritual things; and that rather than think of God, and the concerns of our ſouls, we will baniſh reflection altogether, and ſtudy to forget both God and ourſelves. It was the judgement of one of the fathers, that it was more lawful to plow than to dance on the Lord's day; and the ſame thing may be ſaid of all other diverſions, which entirely withdraw us from the buſineſs of religion, and will not ſuffer our minds to be ſerious and compoſed. If it is criminal to work or to labour on this day, it muſt evidently be ſtill more ſo to waſte the time in carnal mirth, or in indolence and ſloth, or in vain and trifling amuſements. In a word, whatever is foreign to religion, or has not a direct tendency to glorify God, and advance our own ſpiritual intereſt, ought carefully to be avoided on this holy day, as we regard the

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approbation of God, and our own preſent and eternal happineſs.

Having thus laid your duty in this matter before you, it only remains, in the

Third and *laſt* place, That I enforce the practice of it by ſome motives and arguments.—And,

1ſt, Allow me to obſerve, that though this commandment were to be conſidered as a mere poſitive inſtitution, or only as a teſt of our obedience and ſubjection to God; yet the portion of time which is thereby ſeparated from common uſe, is ſo very moderate, that we have not the remoteſt cauſe to complain of it. I am even perſuaded, that were God to refer the matter to ourſelves, and, after having repreſented that he had brought us into being, and would allow us a certain term of life in his world, were to aſk us what portion of our time we would freely reſign to his diſpoſal, as an acknowledgement of his righteous title to the whole, we ſhould be aſhamed to offer ſo little as he hath been pleaſed to demand. I am apt to think, that, inſtead of every ſeventh day,

we

we ſhould have thought every other day, or the full half of our time, the leaſt that could be offered in return for ſuch undeſerved goodneſs. Put the caſe, that any of you were lying on a deathbed, and God ſhould ſay to you, How much of your time will you conſecrate to my ſervice in future, if I ſhall now be pleaſed to reſtore you to health again? I ſuppoſe moſt of you would reply, without any heſitation, Lord, I make no conditions: I put myſelf wholly into thy hands: demand of me whatſoever thou wilt. Hear how Hezekiah expreſſeth himſelf, after his miraculous recovery from a deadly diſeaſe (Iſa. xxxviii. 19, 20.), "The living, the "living, he ſhall praiſe thee as I do this "day. The father to the children ſhall "make known thy truth. The Lord was "ready to ſave me; therefore we will ſing "my ſongs to the ſtringed inſtruments all "the days of our life in the houſe of the "Lord." He doth not limit his reſolutions of thankſgiving and praiſe to the Sabbath day; he thought all the days of his life a tribute of conſecrated time ſmall enough in return for the goodneſs which had reſcued him

him from the grave. And is it poſſible, that any of us ſhould judge one day in ſeven too much, even though the duties required on it were in their own nature diſagreeable, and had nothing to recommend them but the mere authority of the Lawgiver? Nay, my brethren, I ſhall put the caſe a little ſtronger. Suppoſe yourſelves in the immediate proſpect of death, either by ſickneſs or by ſome external cauſe, and that God ſhould ſay to you in theſe circumſtances, I will ſave you from this danger, on condition that every ſeventh day you will quietly ſubmit to the torments of ſome acute diſtemper, as long as I ſhall continue you in the world. Do you imagine that you would reject theſe terms? God knows, and yourſelves know, that you would not reject them; the offer would appear too good to be refuſed. If God then requires nothing more ſevere than this, your own reaſon muſt tell you that there is no cauſe to complain. But what are the duties which God requires of us? Are they diſagreeable in their own nature? Have they no value or excellence in themſelves? On the contrary, they are infinitely

fit

fit and reaſonable, and every way calculated to give the trueſt ſatisfaction, the moſt ſublime pleaſure, to the ſoul of man.—This I ſhall ſtate as a

2*d* argument for enforcing obedience to the commandment in the text. What can be more rational or delightful to a well-formed mind, than to contemplate the wonderful works of God in creation, providence, and grace? What can be more becoming, than to join with others in adoring the perfections of the Father of our ſpirits, and in aſcribing that glory which is due to his name? Can any thing be more pleaſant, than to retire from the hurry of a vain world, that without reſerve we may pour out our hearts, and lay open the ſecret deſires of our ſouls, in the preſence of that great Being, whoſe nature diſpoſeth him to pity us, and whoſe power enables him to beſtow upon us, in the fulleſt and moſt effectual manner, every bleſſing that can promote our moſt important intereſts? Can any entertainment be more rational, more truly divine, than to read the lively oracles of God, and to converſe with our fellow Chriſtians,

Chriſtians, upon the moſt intereſting of all ſubjects, the ſalvation of our ſouls, and the means of ſecuring an "inheritance incor-"ruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth "not away?" One ſhould think that a bare counſel, nay, even a permiſſion, to ſpend one day in ſeven in ſuch pleaſant and profitable exerciſes, would be regarded as a ſingular privilege, that deſerved our warmeſt returns of gratitude and praiſe. The force of this argument is not weakened, becauſe thoſe who are alienated from the life of God have no reliſh for the pleaſures which ariſe from the exerciſes of devotion. It is not the reaſon of the thing which leads the depraved mind to account "the Sabbath a "wearineſs," or to ſay, "When will the "Sabbath be over?" After ſix days ſpent in proviſion for the body, is one day too long to care for the ſoul? Nay, after deducing the time which is neceſſarily employed in ſleeping and eating and drinking, can we not find as much in God, in Chriſt, and in heaven, as may afford us entertainment for the ſcanty remainder of twenty-four hours? Alas, my brethren, how ſhall we employ

an everlaſting Sabbath, if one Sabbath in the week is ſo tedious and burdenſome? Can thoſe be candidates for immortal glory, who think one day too long for the work of heaven, unleſs they relieve themſelves, by conſuming the greater part of it in idle converſation or trifling amuſements?—— My

3*d* argument to enforce this commandment, ſhall be taken from the many advantages which flow from the religious obſervance of the Sabbath. Hereby we ſhall obtain the bleſſing of God, according to that large and comprehenſive promiſe, Iſaiah lviii. 13, 14. "If thou turn away "thy foot from the Sabbath from doing "thy pleaſure on my holy day, and call the "Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord "honourable, and ſhalt honour him, not "doing thine own ways, nor finding thine "own pleaſure, nor ſpeaking thine own "words, then ſhalt thou delight thyſelf in "the Lord, and I will cauſe thee to ride "upon the high places of the earth, and "feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy "father, for the mouth of the Lord hath "ſpoken

" ſpoken it." If we honour God on this ſeparate day, which he claims as his ſpecial property, then may we expect to be honoured by him on the other days of the week, which he hath given us for our own uſe. The truth of this hath been frequently experienced by the people of God; and among theſe, too, by ſome of the moſt eminent character, not only for piety, but alſo for learning and taſte, and knowledge of the world. I ſhall mention one who was highly reſpected in his own time, and whoſe character and writings are to this day univerſally eſteemed. The learned Judge Hales, ſpeaking of his experience on this ſubject, hath theſe words: " I have found," ſaith he, " by a ſtrict and diligent obſerva-
" tion, that a due obſerving the duty of this
" day, hath ever had joined to it a bleſſing
" upon the reſt of my time; and the week
" that hath been ſo begun, hath been bleſ-
" ſed and proſperous to me. And, on the
" other ſide, when I have been negligent of
" the duties of this day, the reſt of the
" week hath been unſucceſsful and unhappy
" to my ſecular employments; ſo that I

" could eaſily make an eſtimate of my ſuc-
" ceſſes in my own ſecular employments
" the week following, by the manner of my
" paſſing this day. And this," adds he, " I
" do not write lightly or inconſiderately,
" but upon a long and ſound obſervation
" and experience."—Nay, the right obſer-
vance of this duty will procure national as
well as perſonal bleſſings: for ſo God pro-
miſed to his ancient church (Jer. xvii. 24,
25.), " If ye diligently hearken unto me, to
" bring in no burden through the gates of
" this city on the Sabbath day, but hal-
" low the Sabbath-day, to do no work
" therein; then ſhall there enter into the
" gates of this city, kings and princes
" ſitting upon the throne of David, riding
" in chariots, and on horſes, they and their
" princes, the men of Judah, and the in-
" habitants of Jeruſalem, and this city ſhall
" remain for ever." I do not mean by
theſe arguments to bribe you into a merce-
nary or political obſervance of the Chriſtian
Sabbath. Should you ſpend the whole day
in reading, praying, praiſing, or any other
forms of religious worſhip, merely, or even
principally from a regard to your own pri-
vate

vate intereſt, or the public proſperity of the nation to which you belong, I muſt be ſo faithful as to tell you, that it would not be accepted. Nay, God would number theſe hypocritical ſervices among your moſt provoking ſins. For it is the heart which God requires; and if that be with-held, he will accept of no outward homage. But I mention theſe things to ſhow you, that Sabbath-breakers muſt be utterly inexcuſable, when they tranſgreſs a law, which is not only moſt reaſonable in itſelf, but which hath alſo peculiar promiſes annexed to it, of temporal proſperity and happineſs.——And with the ſame view, I am now going to add a

4*th* conſideration for enforcing obedience to this commandment, namely, That the tranſgreſſion of it is attended with many ſad and fatal conſequences. God hath frequently puniſhed this ſin, by inflicting very awful judgments both upon ſocieties and particular perſons. There was an expreſs ſtatute in the Jewiſh law, appointing the Sabbath-breaker to be put to death (Exod. xxxi. 12, 16.); and this puniſhment was actually inflicted upon one who was

found gathering ſticks on that holy day: "All the congregation brought him without the camp, and ſtoned him with ſtones, and he died, as the Lord commanded Moſes," (Num. xv. 32, 37.) How alarming is that threatening, (Jerem. xvii. 27.), "If ye will not hearken unto me, to hallow the Sabbath-day, and not to bear a burden, even entering in at the gates of Jeruſalem, on the Sabbath day; then will I kindle a fire the gates thereof, and it ſhall devour the palaces of Jeruſalem, and it ſhall not be quenched." Accordingly, Nehemiah imputes all the calamities which befel the Jewiſh nation to this, as one of the principal cauſes of God's anger againſt that people. "Then, (ſaith he), I contended with the nobles of Judah, and ſaid unto them, What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the Sabbath day? Did not your fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this city; yet ye bring more wrath upon Iſrael by profaning the Sabbath." And I am verily perſuaded, that many of the national calamities with which

we have been viſited, may juſtly be attributed to the ſame cauſe. Nor is it greatly to be wondered at, when we conſider, that this ſin is not only an act of rebellion againſt the authority of God, but alſo a bold and ſacrilegious invaſion of his property, in applying to common uſe that proportion of time which he hath reſerved for himſelf, and ſet apart for the immediate exerciſes of his worſhip.

But beſides this, the abuſe or neglect of the Sabbath muſt be attended with pernicious conſequences on ſeveral other accounts. To this gracious inſtitution it is in a great meaſure owing that any ſenſe of God, and of divine things, is preſerved in the world. Were this day rendered common, the bulk of mankind would ſoon ſink into Atheiſm or utter profaneneſs. What would become of the lower ranks in ſociety, whoſe ſervitude and bodily neceſſities oblige them to work hard for daily bread, were it not for this ſeparated day, on which they are invited and commanded to care for their ſouls? I am even afraid, that the tyranny and covetouſneſs of many maſters

would incline them to deny their ſervants any leiſure whatſoever, either for the reſt of their bodies, or the improvement of their minds, had not God, in mercy, made a law for one day of reſt and liberty in the week. In proportion as this law is deſpiſed and neglected, in the ſame proportion will religion fall into decay, the impreſſions of God become feeble and languid; while ignorance, brutality, oppreſſion, and all the evils which unreſtrained corruption can produce. will prevail and render this earth the very ſuburbs of hell.

Theſe are all the arguments which I ſhall at preſent uſe with you, for enforcing the obſervance of the Chriſtian Sabbath. The proportion of time is ſo moderate, that even upon the ſuppoſition that the duties required were painful, there could be no juſt cauſe of complaint. Yet ſo far is this ſuppoſition from being true, that, on the contrary, the work aſſigned us on this holy day is moſt pleaſant and delightful; inſomuch that were our minds in a right temper, we would count it our happineſs to ſpend our whole time, nay, a whole eternity in ſuch heavenly

heavenly employment. Beſides, the religious obſervance of this holy day is accompanied with many ſignal advantages, and is a mean of deriving the bleſſing of God, both upon individuals and communities; whereas the profanation or neglect of it, is in every reſpect pernicious, both to particular perſons and to ſocieties.

And if theſe things are ſo, how many who now hear me, ought to bluſh and be aſhamed to lift up their faces either before God or man? But as reformation is the great object which I have in view, I ſhall ſpare the reproof which I once intended to give; and inſtead of upbraiding you for the time paſt, I ſhall rather intreat you, by the meekneſs and gentleneſs of Chriſt to behave more dutifully for the time to come. And my exhortation ſhall be chiefly directed to parents and maſters of families, to whom the commandment ſeems to be principally addreſſed. It is true, the expreſſion "within thy gates," may relate to the gates of a city as well as of a particular houſe: and then it would intimate to us this truth, that it is the duty of magiſtrates to ſecure the obſervance of this

this day, by the exercise of that power and authority with which their public station invests them. But as there would be less occasion for the interposition of civil authority, if parents and heads of families would mind their proper work, to these I shall more directly address what I have to say. And I must tell you in the name of God, that you are strictly accountable, not only for your own conduct, but likewise for the conduct of all within your houses on this holy day. Hear how the commandment runs: "Remember the Sabbath day to keep "it holy: six days shalt thou labour and do "all thy work: but the seventh day is the "Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou "shalt not do any work, thou nor thy son, "nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor "thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor the "stranger that is within thy gates." You see that you are charged with the immediate inspection, not only of your children and servants, but likewise of the stranger who sojourns with you, over whom you have no jurisdiction or authority through the rest of the week.

I ſhould be glad to know what thoſe who keep houſes of public entertainment think of this doctrine. A reſpectful complaiſance and readineſs to ſerve, are the general duties of your ſtation. But there is one day of the week, on which God permits, nay commands you to take ſtate to yourſelves, and to keep your doors ſhut againſt the idle and profane of what rank ſoever, and to reſtrain ſuch as neceſſity brings to your houſes, from every thing that is profane, either in ſpeech or behaviour. If any ſhall queſtion your authority, this precept is your charter, veſting you with the ſame power over the ſtranger that is within your gates, as over your own children and ſervants; and even charging you to exerciſe that power, as you would not incur the wrath of Almighty God. Did you know that you poſſeſſed ſo high a privilege? I hope, for your own ſakes, that you did not: and now that I have told you the ſecret, I pray that God may give you wiſdom and courage to improve it.

To conclude: Let all of us be perſuaded to pay a proper regard to this divine precept.

cept. If we have any concern for the glory of God, for the honour of our Redeemer, for the welfare of our country, or for own comfort and happineſs, either in this world, or the world to come, let us make conſcience of the important duties of the Lord's day, that after having finiſhed our courſe on earth, we may be fixed as pillars in the temple above, and may ſpend an eternal Sabbath in the preſence God and of the Lamb. *Amen.*

SER-

SERMON X.

2 SAMUEL vi. 20.

Then David returned to bleſs his houſehold.

FROM the example of this great and good man, I propoſe to recommend to you the important, but much neglected duty, of family-worſhip. And I have choſen the example of a king, for two reaſons.

1*ſt*, Becauſe the actions of one in that elevated ſtation are commonly more regarded than thoſe of a meaner perſon. "The "poor man's wiſdom is deſpiſed, and his "words are not heard." But if one arrayed in royal apparel, make an oration from a throne, the people ſhall give a ſhout, ſaying, "It is the voice of a god, and not of a man." This partial regard is indeed a ſore evil under the ſun: but in the preſent caſe, it is poſſible to bring good out of it, by making that

that pomp or ſplendour, which ſo often covers the deformity of vice, a mean of throwing a luſtre upon religion, and of rendering a thing ſo truly excellent in itſelf, more reſpectable in our eyes.

2*dly*, It is but too obvious, that the neglect of family-worſhip prevails chiefly among thoſe who either are, or imagine themſelves to be, of a better rank than others: nay, ſome who were punctual in the performance of this duty, while their ſtation and circumſtances were low, have been obſerved to lay it aſide, when, by the bounty of Providence, their ſtate became more proſperous. This preſents us with a very melancholy proſpect, and threatens nothing leſs than the utter extinction of family-religion. For if once it becomes a maxim, that this duty is below the rank of a gentleman, then every one who affects to be thought of that rank will forbear it. In this caſe, it is impoſſible, to foreſee where the evil may ſtop; as there are few people in the world, who do not imagine that they either are, or deſerve to be, of equal conſideration with their neighbours. I have therefore thought it neceſ-

ſary to pitch upon nothing lower than a royal example, that the vanity of no man may take it amiſs when I call upon him to follow it.

We have an account, in the preceding verſes, of David's bringing up the ark of God from the houſe of Obed-edom, into his own city. This was done with ſhouting, and with the ſound of the trumpet; the king himſelf, girded with a linen ephod, attending the ſolemnity, with the higheſt expreſſions of thankfulneſs and joy. When the ark was ſet in its place, in the midſt of the tabernacle that was prepared for it, then David, as we read in the 17th verſe, offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings before the Lord, and afterwards diſmiſſed the aſſembly with preſents which he dealt among all the people, having firſt bleſſed them in the name of the Lord of hoſts. This he did as the Father of his people. But he did not ſtop here. The duties of his public office and character, did not make him forget what was incumbent upon him in his private capacity: for, as my text informs us, "Then David returned to bleſs his houſe-hold;"

" hold;" *i. e.* to pray with them and for them, and probably to offer up his family-thankſgivings for the great national mercy which he had been celebrating in the public aſſembly.—From this plain and inſtructive paſſage of Scripture-hiſtory, I ſhall take occaſion, in the

Firſt place, To prove, that it is the indiſpenſable duty of all to whom God hath given families, to worſhip God publicly in their own houſes; or, that every man is bound, according to the example of David, " to bleſs his houſehold." In the

Second place, I ſhall ſhow you the reaſonableneſs of this duty. And then, in the

Third place, I ſhall repreſent to you the advantages which accompany the practice of it, and the pernicious conſequences which muſt follow from the neglect of it.

I BEGIN with proving, that it is the indiſpenſable duty of all to whom God hath given families, to worſhip God publicly in their own houſes. This is a truth which even the light of nature doth very plainly

teach us. A family is a ſociety connected together by ſuch ſtrict ties, that every argument for the propriety of private prayer, is equally concluſive for that of family-devotion. Of this even the Heathens were ſenſible: for beſides their tutelar deities, who were ſuppoſed to preſide over cities and nations, and who had public honours paid to them in that character, we read of houſehold gods, whom every private family worſhipped at home as their immediate guardians and benefactors.

But the light of Scripture affords us a more clear and ſatisfying diſcovery of our obligations to this duty, as well as of the proper manner of performing it. It reveals to us that great Mediator, by whom we have acceſs to the throne of grace, and through whom all our religious ſervices are accepted by God. It not only repreſents prayer as a privilege which we are permitted to uſe, but expreſsly requires it as a duty which we are bound to perform. Thus we are commanded, "In every thing, by prayer and "ſupplication, with thankſgiving, to make "our requeſts known unto God; to pray

" always, with all prayer and ſupplication " in the Spirit, and to continue in prayer:" And it is obſervable, that this laſt exhortation is particularly addreſſed to maſters of families, as you may read (Coloſſ. iv. 1, 2.), " Maſters, give unto your ſervants that " which is juſt and equal, knowing that ye " alſo have a Maſter in heaven." The Apoſtle goes on, ſtill addreſſing them in the ſame character; " Continue in prayer, and " watch in the ſame, with thankſgiving." In the ſame ſtrain Paul writes to Timothy (1 Tim. ii. 8.), " I will therefore, that men " pray every where, lifting up holy hands, " without wrath or doubting." And ſurely, if in all places men ought to lift up holy hands unto God, much more ought they to do ſo in their own families, which are immediately under their care, and for whoſe ſpiritual as well as temporal intereſt they ought to be chiefly concerned. Accordingly, we learn from the ſacred hiſtory, that this has been the uniform practice of good men in all ages of the world. The care of the ancient Patriarchs, to keep up family-religion, is very remarkable. We find Abraham

braham rearing up altars wherever he came: And for what end did he this, but that on theſe altars he might offer ſacrifices, and call upon God with his houſehold? We have another bright example of this in Job, of whom we read (Job i. 5.), that "he ſent "for his ſons and ſanctified them, and roſe "up early in the morning, and offered burnt-"offerings for each of them;" and leſt it might be thought that this family-worſhip was only occaſional and accidental, it is added at the cloſe of the verſe, "Thus did Job "continually." Nor was this peculiar to the patriarchal ſtate, when each family was a church by itſelf; but the ſame good practice was continued after the Jews were formed into a national church, and had prieſts appointed to preſide in the public worſhip. Thus Joſhua vowed, not only for himſelf, but likewiſe for his houſe, that they would ſerve the Lord: which plainly imports a reſolution on his part, to uſe all the means in his power to make his family do ſo: particularly, to worſhip God before them, and to take care that none ſhould dwell in his houſe, who would not join in this holy

ſervice. The example of David in the text is abundantly plain; for though he had prieſts and Levites about him, yet he did not devolve the work upon them, but he himſelf, as head and maſter of the houſe, "bleſſed his houſehold."

In the New Teſtament writings, it is very uſual to give private families of devout Chriſtians the name of churches. But ſurely this would have been a moſt improper appellation, if God had not been publicly acknowledged, and the daily ſacrifices of prayers and praiſes had not been offered in them.

Theſe, I think, are ſufficient intimations of the will of God in this matter; and may ſerve to convince any man, who acknowledgeth the divine authority of the Scriptures, that it is the unqueſtionable duty of all who have families, to maintain the worſhip of God in their houſes.——The reaſonableneſs of this duty was the

Second thing which I propoſed to ſhow: and this, I hope, will appear from the following conſiderations.

1ſt,

1*ſt*, Families are natural ſocieties, formed originally by God, and held together by his providence. Previous to all civil or religious eſtabliſhments, families ſubſiſted. All the obligations which are incumbent on communities of any kind, were originally, and ſtill continue to be, incumbent on particular families. Were the preſent ſtate of ſociety to be diſſolved, and the patriarchal ſtate reſtored, it is evident, that family-worſhip would be the only worſhip of God. Is it poſſible, then, that this original obligation can ever be cancelled? What is there to be pled as a reaſon for cancelling it? Will you ſay, that the private duty is ſuperſeded by the public ordinances which we have the opportunity of attending? This argument might as well be uſed to diſprove the obligation to ſecret and perſonal devotion; and therefore, by proving too much, it proves nothing at all. For can any perſon ſeriouſly be of opinion, that the providence of God hath beſtowed theſe public advantages on us, in order to relax the obligations which we owe to him in our houſes, and in our cloſets?—But,

2*dly*, As God is the founder, ſo he is likewiſe the gracious benefactor of our families. All the bleſſings which we enjoy flow from his bounty, and depend entirely on his favour. Surely, then, if perſonal bleſſings claim the private acknowledgements of the perſon who receives them, family bleſſings ought, in like manner, to be acknowledged by united thankſgivings in our houſehold. Were a man, having a numerous offspring, to receive ſome ſignal favour from an earthly benefactor, by which his circumſtances were changed from meanneſs and want, to an eaſy or a decent competence; would it not be a natural acknowledgement for him to bring his family and children in their beſt apparel, and preſent them to his benefactor, fed and clothed with his bounty, to offer him their united thanks? Would not ſuch a ſcene be delightful on both ſides? Would it not be enjoyed as a very lovely appearance, even by a mere ſpectator? And is there leſs beauty or propeiety in the ſame acknowledgements offered to the God in whom we live and breathe, and who giveth us all things richly to enjoy? Doth

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he ſet the hedge of his protection around us, and defend us from the many evils to which we are continually expoſed; and ſhall he yet have no tribute of praiſe offered up from thoſe houſes in which he maketh us to dwell in ſafety? How diſingenuous and unreaſonable muſt this appear to every candid and grateful mind!

3*dly*, As we receive all our family-bleſſings from God, ſo we are guilty alſo of many family-ſins againſt him, and ought therefore to join together in the penitent confeſſion of our ſins, and in deprecating the judgments which we have deſerved. In a word, whatever reaſon there is for ſingle perſons to worſhip God, there is the ſame reaſon for families to do it. As there are perſonal ſins and wants and mercies, ſo there are family ſins, family wants and troubles, family mercies and deliverances; and therefore it muſt appear highly reaſonable, that the members of each family ſhould unite together in humiliation and prayer, and thankſgiving. Thoſe who ſin together, ſhould aſk forgiveneſs together; and thoſe who receive mercies together,

ſhould join in praiſing their common benefactor.

Thus have I endeavoured to ſhow, that family-worſhip is not only a duty by virtue of the divine command, but is ſo fit and becoming in itſelf, that although the authority binding us to it were leſs apparent, yet every man who allows himſelf to think, muſt immediately be convinced, by his own reaſon and conſcience, that ſuch homage is certainly due to God, and that they are highly criminal who refuſe or neglect to offer it.—I proceed now, in the

Third place, To repreſent to you the manifold advantages which accompany the practice of this duty, and the pernicious conſequences which flow from the neglect of it.

1*ſt*, Then, the practice of this duty would be of great uſe to promote even your temporal and worldly intereſt. I addreſs myſelf to you, who are parents or maſters; and ſurely this conſideration muſt appear in your own eyes to merit ſome regard. I need not ſtay to prove to you, that your proſperity, as well as your comfort, depends very much

much upon the dutiful behaviour of your children, and the fidelity of your ſervants. This, I ſuppoſe, you will readily acknowledge. Now, it is evident to a demonſtration, that nothing can contribute more effectually to this, than the good practice which I am recommending to you. Bring the fear of God into your families, and that will ſecure your authority better than any thing elſe can do. The influence of a religious principle will be as powerful and operative when you are abſent from them as when you are preſent, becauſe God is always preſent; and conſequently the obedience which flows from a regard to him, muſt in every place, and at all times, be the ſame. Hereby, too, you will gain their eſteem and love; which are the moſt powerful and permanent of all bonds of duty. There is a certain majeſty in the image of God, which commands reverence to itſelf, even from the worſt of men. Thus, we are told of Herod (Mark, vi. 20.), that he feared John, becauſe he knew him to be a holy and a juſt man. And if this wicked prince was ſo much overawed by the exemplary holi-

holineſs of a mean ſubject, how venerable muſt a devout parent or maſter appear in the eyes of his own family, when, beſides that authority which his ſtation gives him, they ſee him adorned with that piety and regard to God, which of themſelves would dignify him, and render him worthy of their eſteem and honour? How muſt it endear him to their hearts, to behold his anxious concern for their welfare; to hear him morning and evening commending them to the protection of Almighty God, imploring the pardon of their ſins, and earneſtly ſoliciting the ſame bleſſings for them which he begs for himſelf? And how muſt this eſteem and love influence their whole behaviour, and make them not only faithful, but cheerful, active, and zealous in every part of the duty and ſervice which they owe him? I am aware, that many think to maintain their authority in their families, by other ſort of prayers than thoſe I am recommending: I mean, by horrid curſes and imprecations; yea, ſome are ſo abandoned as to plead the neceſſity of theſe, to render their orders effectual. But this practice muſt

muſt appear ſo abſurd and odious to every thinking perſon, that, I am perſuaded, I need not ſpend your time in expoſing it. Such a vile and impious habit muſt evidently deſtroy at once all that eſteem and love, which are the only ſure and permanent principles of obedience. Their whole authority, therefore, muſt lean on the precarious foundation of a ſervile fear, which God, who hath the hearts of all men in his hands, can remove when he pleaſes; and then they ſhall become utterly contemptible, and may curſe on without having any perſon to regard them, till their own curſes overtake them. —But,

2*dly*, As the practice of worſhipping God in your houſes, would contribute much to your worldly proſperity, in the manner I have juſt now explained; ſo it has likewiſe a manifeſt tendency to promote your ſpiritual and eternal intereſt. It is not only a conſiderable branch of that homage which you owe to God, but it may be alſo of great uſe to reſtrain you from ſin, and to render you cautious and circumſpect in every part of your behaviour. A man will be aſhamed

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to do any thing againſt the honour of that God whom he ſo publicly acknowledges before his family; and the very deſire of appearing conſiſtent with himſelf in the eyes of his children or ſervants, will hardly fail to produce at leaſt an outward decency, and to reſtrain him from many of thoſe ſcandalous ſins which he might otherwiſe be in danger of committing. So that though family worſhip ſerved no higher purpoſe than to hedge in our practice before our houſehold, I ſhould even think that a conſiderable recommendation of it; and every wiſe and good man muſt eſteem and value it upon that account. But this is one of the leaſt of its happy effects. The practice of this duty would not only render our outward conduct cautious and decent, but would alſo tincture our minds deeply with a ſenſe of God, and of divine things. It would give us greater boldneſs, too, in our ſecret approaches to the throne of grace. How can that man have any confidence or enlargement of heart in ſecret prayer, whoſe conſcience reproacheth him with never having honoured that God in public, from whom

whom he is now going to aſk the moſt unmerited favours? It is true, indeed, that our Lord, in great condeſcenſion, granted a private audience, in the night ſeaſon, to Nicodemus, who had not the courage to own him in the face of the day. But no man hath reaſon to expect the ſame indulgence now. Nay, however uncharitable it may be thought, I muſt declare it as my opinion, that the neglect of public duties gives too juſt ground to ſuſpect, that thoſe of a more private nature are either little minded, or ſuperficially performed. For, did you obtain acceſs to God in ſecret prayer, and taſte the ſweetneſs of holy communion with him in your cloſets, there can be no doubt that you would thereby be diſpoſed to the duties of ſocial worſhip.—A

3*d* advantage of family worſhip is, that under the influences of the divine Spirit, it is one of the moſt effectual means of promoting the ſalvation of all your houſehold. Many godly perſons have aſcribed their own vital impreſſions of religion to their living in a devout family: and many a ſinner, ruined by vice and evil habits, has too juſt-

ly laid the blame of it on the wickedneſs of thoſe with whom he dwelt. What numbers of children and ſervants have been loſt for want of that good example which it was the duty of their parents or maſters to have given them? As in a profane and ſenſual family there are continual temptations to ſin, to ſwearing, lying, intemperance, and contempt of God; ſo in a devout well governed houſe, there are continual incitements to a holy life, to faith, love, ſobriety, and heavenly mindedneſs. The authority of the heads of the family, and the converſation and example of all the members of it, are powerful inducements to a religious temper and behaviour. As in a well-diſciplined army, even the cowards are conſtrained to ſtand to their arms, and to act valiantly, by the general order of the whole; ſo in a religious houſehold, a wicked man can ſcarcely contrive how to live wickedly, but ſeems to be almoſt a ſaint, by being continually among thoſe who appear to be ſaints. O how eaſy and well paved (if I may uſe the expreſſion) is the way to heaven in ſuch a gracious ſociety, in compariſon of what it is to thoſe

thoſe who dwell in the houſes of the profane and ſenſual! In the former, the advantages of inſtruction, authority, example, and converſation, are all on the ſide of God and religion: in the latter, the ſame powerful circumſtances are all on the ſide of corrupt nature, and puſh men forward in the broad way that leads to deſtruction.

If then you would not be guilty of bringing ruin on immortal ſouls; if you wiſh to have the bleſſing of them who are ready to periſh for ever, to come upon you; if you deſire that your children and ſervants ſhould be pious and happy; if you would have your whole domeſtic ſociety bleſſed; let your houſehold be daily conſecrated by fervent prayer to Almighty God.—The

4th and *laſt* advantage of family-religion, which I ſhall mention, is its tendency to form an holy church and people, and to propagate religion from generation to generation. The public ſtate of religion in the world, muſt entirely depend on the care beſtowed on the cultivation of it in private families. If the nurſery be neglected, how

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is it poſſible that the plantation ſhould proſper? Such as the families are, of which congregations, churches, and kingdoms are compoſed, ſuch will be the flouriſhing or the decayed ſtate of religion in theſe larger communities. And conſequently it is as clear as noon-day, that the diſregard ſhown to God in our houſeholds, is the fatal ſource of that amazing corruption of manners in the preſent age, which almoſt every one pretends to lament, but almoſt none ſets himſelf in earneſt to reform. Would you then put a ſtop to abounding iniquity, and promote the cauſe of God and religion, begin at home, and let your Maker have that honour in your families to which he is intitled.

Had we, who miniſter in the public worſhip of God, only to lay thoſe ſtones in order in the building, which parents and maſters of families had previouſly poliſhed, how eaſy and delightful would be our taſk? how comely and beautiful would our worſhipping aſſemblies appear? how pure and comfortable would their communion be? But if theſe ſhall neglect to exert

exert their proper influence; if the work of hundreds or thouſands ſhall be left to be performed by one or two, what a tedious labour muſt it prove? What effect can divine truths, delivered once a-week, have, unleſs the impreſſion of them be afterwards kept alive by family-devotion and domeſtic religion? It is no wonder that a tender plant ſhould wither and die which is ſeldom viſited or watered: and it is as little wonderful, that thoſe ſhould continue wicked and impenitent, who but once a-week come under the influence of a religious ordinance; and who neither ſee nor hear any thing of God, but when the ſtated ſeaſon of public inſtruction returns. If religion die in families, how can it live in nations? Is it not an inevitable conſequence, that all our public devotions muſt in this caſe dwindle away into mere hypocriſy, and lifeleſs unavailing forms of worſhip?

I have thus endeavoured to repreſent to you the manifold advantages which would ariſe from maintaining the worſhip of God in your families. And I have now only to

add, that though you were willing to be without theſe advantages, yet this loſs is not the whole penalty which muſt attend the neglect of that duty. This avowed diſregard of God will not always paſs unpuniſhed. The day is coming, when "God "will pour out his fury upon the Heathen "that know him not, and upon the families "that call not upon his name."—"Con-"ſider this, ye that now forget God, leſt "he tear you in pieces, when there is none "to deliver."

I would now conclude the ſubject by preſſing you, with all the earneſtneſs of which I am capable, to the performance of this neceſſary and important duty, were it not that I think it may be of uſe to conſider ſome of thoſe excuſes by which the neglect of it is commonly defended.

Some plead their rank and ſtation in the world; but on what principles I could never yet diſcover. I cannot conceive any principle of reaſon more ſtrong and obvious, than that uttered by our Saviour (Luke xii. 48.), "Unto whomſoever much "is given, of him ſhall much be required; "and

" and to whom men have committed much, " of him will they aſk the more." And certainly if benefits conferred deſerve any return, they at leaſt deſerve thanks: if God hath placed us in a more diſtinguiſhed ſtation, we owe to him a more ſolemn and devout acknowledgement. Riches and honours, inſtead of ſetting a man above the obligation of family-worſhip, rather bind it more ſtrictly on him: and that it is below no man of any ſtation whatſoever to perform this office, appears by the example in my text; the example of one in the moſt elevated ſtation known among men, returning from the public worſhip of God to bleſs his houſehold.

Others plead that it has not been the practice of their families, and that they are not inclined to bring a new cuſtom into it. To theſe I anſwer, that the reaſon of this duty is as old as eternity itſelf, and the practice of it is as ancient as the firſt family of mankind. In every ſucceeding age, down to the preſent day, there have been families in which God was worſhipped, and there will be ſuch until the end of the

world. Nay, I dare venture to affirm, that there are few now hearing me, whoſe fathers or grandfathers did not at leaſt maintain the form of this duty. For, however much it is deſpiſed now, it is certain, that it was in reputation about an hundred years ago, and generally practiſed by men of all ranks. It deſerves, therefore, to be inquired into, when, or by whom, and for what cauſe, this good old cuſtom was laid aſide? what was the ſhameful period in which the worſhip of God was turned out of doors, to make way for irreligion, and a contempt of divine things? Then, indeed, a moſt baſe and diſhonourable innovation was made in your families: and therefore it muſt be your glory to reſtore things to their ancient ſtate, and to give the worſhip of God that room in your houſes which it formerly poſſeſſed.

But if it be really true, that this important duty has been always neglected in your families, believe me it is now high time to introduce it. Your danger is greater than you are aware of. Puniſhment loſeth nothing by delay; the ſlower it advances, the

the heavier it will prove. And therefore you have reaſon to fear, that the wrath of God, which has been ſo long reſtrained, ſhall at length break forth with double violence, if it is not prevented by a ſpeedy reformation.

Another excuſe, by which ſome defend their neglect of this duty, is their inability to perform it well. They cannot pray to God in public in ſo decent a manner as they would incline. In anſwer to this, I need only obſerve, that, next to the divine bleſſing, nothing contributes more to teach men to pray, than frequent practice and uſe. So that, if upon this account you neglect the duty, your inability can paſs for nothing elſe than a feigned pretence to cover your unwillingneſs: for, were you as willing to learn to pray, as to acquire the knowledge of any art, you would ſoon, by diligent endeavours, attain a competent meaſure of this excellent gift. Beſides, if there is firſt a willing mind, it is accepted according to what a man hath: it is the ſincerity of your deſires which God regards, and not the expreſſions with which

you clothe them: and if you ſet about this duty in good earneſt, and in the beſt manner you can, though perhaps you may come ſhort of what you wiſh, God will both accept and aſſiſt you in your humble and well meant attempts to honour him.

Upon the whole, then, may I not hope that you will hearken to what I have ſaid? God is now offering himſelf to be your gueſt, and is, by us, demanding an entrance into your hearts, and into your houſes; and can you reſolve on refuſing him? Shall the great King of heaven thus ſtand at your doors, and knock, and yet meet with a repulſe? If the authority of God has any weight with you; if your reaſon can prevail with you; if your own immortal ſouls, or the ſouls of thoſe who dwell with you, appear worthy of your regard: in a word, if duty, gratitude, or intereſt, can move you, all theſe conſpire to enforce my exhortation, and to plead the cauſe of family-worſhip. And muſt theſe powerful advocates plead in vain? muſt they turn evidences againſt you, and appear at laſt in judgment to condemn you? God forbid. I deſire to hope better things

things of you, and things that accompany ſalvation, though I thus ſpeak.

May the Spirit of all grace ſeal theſe inſtructions, and powerfully determine you to the practice of this duty, that by the exerciſe of ſocial worſhip here below, you may be gradually prepared for the more exalted worſhip of the triumphant ſociety above, who all with one heart, and one voice, aſcribe ſalvation to him that ſitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

SERMON XI.

MATTHEW vi. 10.*

——Thy kingdom come.——

THE correſpondence between heaven and earth is preſerved and conducted by Chriſt alone: "For no man cometh," or can come, "to the Father, but by him," (John xiv. 6.) It is he who preſents all our homage to God; it is he who tranſmits to him all our petitions; and by his hands all mercy and grace are conveyed to us. Our moſt fervent prayers, the devouteſt breathings of our ſouls, muſt not only be purged from that defilement which cleaves to them, but even in their greateſt purity, they muſt be offered up in his cenſer, in order to their acceptance, and can only aſcend by the incenſe of his ſacrifice.

It

* Preached before the Society in Scotland for Propagating Chriſtian Knowledge, *January* 4. 1748.

It ſhould therefore be our firſt care, in all our approaches to the throne of grace, to ſolicit the favour of this powerful Mediator, and to procure his friendly interpoſition in our behalf; and then we ſhall have no cauſe to dread a repulſe; for his interceſſion is, and muſt be, always prevalent. The dignity of his perſon, his relation to the Father, and eſpecially the perfection of that ſacrifice upon which his interceſſion is founded, effectually ſecure acceptance to us: ſo that if once we are fully perſuaded that our requeſts are framed according to his will, we need have no diſtreſsful anxiety about their ſucceſs, for he will enforce them with all the merit of his own blood: and therefore we may confidently hope to obtain what we aſk, in that time and way which unerring wiſdom ſees beſt for us: "For this," ſays the Apoſtle John, "is the confidence which "we have in the Son of God, that if we aſk "any thing according to his will, he heareth "us: and if we know that he heareth us, "we know that we have the petitions we de-"ſired of him," 1 John v. 14, 15.

This, my brethren, is an abundant ſource of

of conſolation and joy; and though our deſires are limited to ſuch things as are agreeable to the will of our Redeemer; yet by this very limitation our comfort is extended, and prayer becomes a privilege of infinitely greater value than otherwiſe it would be. An unconfined liberty in our addreſſes to God, would, in moſt caſes (to ſuch ignorant and unthinking creatures as we are), amount to nothing better than the choice of the means and manner of our own deſtruction, (Eccl. vi. 12.) "For who know-"eth what is good for man in this life:" Whereas our glorious High Prieſt, who is perfectly acquainted with our ſtate, can never be at a loſs to know what is good for us; and the coſtly proofs he hath already given of his mercy and love, leave us no room to ſuſpect his concern for our welfare. The leaſt reflection on his ſufferings, may eaſily convince us, that he ſincerely intends our happineſs, and can diſapprove of nothing but what is hurtful to our intereſt. Neither hath he left it to the uncertain conjectures and doubtful reaſonings of our own minds, to find out what is agreeable to him; this

this is clearly revealed to us in the holy Scriptures: and to render the diſcovery of it ſtill more eaſy to us, he hath furniſhed us with a ſhort but perfect model of devotion, in this comprehenſive prayer which he taught his diſciples; by attending to which, we may learn from his own mouth, after what manner we ſhould addreſs the throne of grace, and what ought to be the matter and order of our deſires. Hereby the ſureſt foundation is laid for our confidence and hope; and whatever is according to this divine pattern, we may aſk with full aſſurance of faith, being confident that he who hath ſecured for us all the bleſſings which we need, will certainly liſten to thoſe deſires which he himſelf hath excited and authoriſed. "And if we know that he "heareth us," we may from thence certainly conclude, "that we ſhall have the pe-"titions we deſired of him."

I ſhall not detain you with any account of the ſeveral parts of this excellent prayer, nor the particular deſign for which our Lord introduced it in this ſermon: Only, to make way for the inſtructions I propoſe

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to lay before you on this occaſion, I ſhall obſerve in general,

That prayer is not only an acknowledgement of our dependence upon God for the bleſſings we aſk; but it likewiſe imports a ſincere reſolution on our part, to put ourſelves in the way of thoſe bleſſings, and to uſe all proper means for obtaining them. Thus, when we pray for daily bread, we do not mean, that God ſhould indulge our idleneſs, and feed us in a miraculous way; but only, that he would countenance our honeſt endeavours, and proſper them by his bleſſing, which alone maketh rich. In like manner, when we pray, as in my text, that the kingdom of God may come, we certainly intimate our own conſent to be employed as inſtruments in carrying on this deſign, and muſt be underſtood as binding and obliging ourſelves, by this petition, to do every thing in our ſphere, that may contribute to promote it.

Accordingly, I ſhall endeavour, in dependence upon the divine aid,

Firſt, To explain and illuſtrate the petition itſelf. And,

Secondly,

Secondly, To ſhow what may reaſonably be expected from us, in conſequence of our uſing it.——Or rather, indeed, what is abſolutely neceſſary to prove that we are ſincere, when we thus pray, " Thy kingdom " come."

It is ſcarcely to be ſuppoſed, that any who read their bibles, can be ignorant of what is here meant by the kingdom of God. This form of ſpeech was very common among the Jews, eſpecially about the time of our Saviour's appearance; and was uſed by them, to ſignify that grand revolution foretold in ancient prophecy, which was to be brought about by the Meſſiah, their long-expected King. Thus, we find the Phariſees (Luke xvii. 20.) inquiring " when the " kingdom of God ſhould come; that is, as the context explains it, when the reign of the Meſſiah ſhould commence: and John the Baptiſt proclaimed the approach of this glorious Perſon in the ſame ſtyle, ſaying, " Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," (Matth. iii. 2.) There are ſeveral other paſſages in the New Teſtament, where

where the ſame phraſe occurs; from which it doth ſtill more plainly appear, that by the "kingdom of God" is meant the goſpel diſpenſation, in which ſubjects were to be gathered to God, by his Son, as the reconciling Mediator, and by him formed into a church or ſpiritual kingdom, againſt which the gates of hell ſhall never prevail; which is to ſubſiſt on earth, and enlarge itſelf in ſpite of all oppoſition, till at length it ſhall become perfect in heaven, and triumph in eternal glory.

Now, this kingdom is either External, comprehending all who make an open profeſſion of faith in Chriſt, and ſubmit to the ordinances which he hath inſtituted; or Internal, conſiſting in that dominion which he exerciſes over the hearts of his ſubjects, converting them by his grace to the faith and obedience of the goſpel, enlightening their minds, renewing their wills, and purifying their affections; filling them with "righteouſneſs, and peace, and joy in the "Holy Ghoſt;" that is, with true Chriſtian virtue, and all the bleſſed fruits and effects of it. And no doubt the petition reſpects

both theſe views of the kingdom of God: for though the laſt, *viz.* the dominion of grace in the heart, or the kingdom of God within us, is beyond compariſon the moſt valuable of the two, and therefore chiefly to be deſired by us; yet, as this kingdom is introduced and eſtabliſhed by means of the ordinances which Chriſt hath appointed, we ought likewiſe to be much concerned for the preſervation and enlargement of the viſible church, or that external kingdom within which theſe ordinances are diſpenſed, and to pray for the one in order to the other.

So that this petition may be conſidered, as directing us to pray for theſe following things:

1ſt, That the goſpel may be propagated throughout the world, and all nations brought to the knowledge of the only true God, and of Jeſus Chriſt whom he hath ſent.

It appears from the prophetic writings of the Old Teſtament, that no leſs than univerſal dominion was promiſed to the Lord Redeemer. "Aſk of me," ſays God, (Pſal. ii.

ii. 8.), " and I ſhall give thee the Heathen " for thine inheritance, and the uttermoſt " parts of the earth for thy poſſeſſion." It was foretold (Pſal. lxxii. 8, 11, 17.), " That his " dominion ſhould reach from ſea to ſea, " and from the river to the ends of the " earth; yea, that all kings ſhould bow " down before him, and all nations ſhould " ſerve him; that men ſhould be bleſſed in " him, and all nations call him bleſſed." And that remarkable paſſage (Dan. vii. 13, 14), is a clear and expreſs declaration on this head. " I ſaw," ſays the Prophet, " in " the night viſions, and behold, one like the " Son of man, came from the clouds of hea- " ven, and came to the Ancient of Days, " and they brought him near before him; " and there was given him dominion, and " glory, and a kingdom, that all people, " nations, and languages ſhould ſerve him."

Now, it is evident, that the extent of his kingdom doth not yet equal theſe magnificent deſcriptions of it. There are ſtill many dark corners of the earth upon which the Sun of Righteouſneſs hath never ariſen; others, which were once viſited with his

healing and comforting light, have had their candleſtick long removed; and the Jews, whoſe return to their own Meſſiah ſhall ſo remarkably enrich the church, and give ſuch life and beauty to it, that Paul compares it to a "reſurrection from the dead" (Rom. xi. 15.); do ſtill retain their prejudice againſt him, and obſtinately refuſe ſubjection to him.

We ought therefore to pray that the goſpel, which hitherto has been confined within very narrow bounds, may gradually ſpread and extend itſelf on every ſide, till at length it obtain poſſeſſion of the whole earth, and "all the kingdoms of this world "become the kingdoms of our God, and of "his Chriſt," (Rev. xi. 15.)—But,

2*dly*, We are more eſpecially to pray for a divine bleſſing to accompany the means of grace;

That the goſpel may come to men, not in word only, but alſo in power, and prove effectual for turning "them from "darkneſs unto light, and from the power "of Satan unto God."—That where Chriſt doth already reign in his external ordi-

nances, there he would alſo erect his throne in the hearts of men, ſubduing ſinners to himſelf, and training up his ſaints, by the influences of his holy Spirit, to a meetneſs for that undefiled inheritance which he hath purchaſed for them.—And,

3dly, We are likewiſe authoriſed by this petition to pray, that whatever ſtands in oppoſition to the kingdom of our Redeemer, either with reſpect to the extent or influence of it, may be removed out of the way:

Particularly, that Antichriſt, that "man "of ſin and ſon of perdition, who oppoſeth "and exalteth himſelf above all that is call-"ed God" (2 Theſſ. ii. 3, 4.), and hath long been "drunk with the blood of ſaints," (Rev. xvii. 6.), may be brought to the ground, and never ariſe any more: that the deluſions of the falſe prophet, and blaſphemous impoſtor Mahomet, which have overſpread ſo great a part of the world, may at length be detected, and his kingdom of darkneſs and violence plucked up by the roots.

And though it doth not belong to us to chooſe the time, or means, or manner of

doing it, for theſe muſt be wholly ſubmitted to Him " who is wonderful in counſel " and excellent in working ;" yet ſurely it is lawful for us, to deſire in general, " that " God would ariſe and ſcatter all his ene- " mies" (Pſal lxviii. 1.): and even to make mention of thoſe enemies in particular, whom he hath deſcribed in Scripture by ſuch plain and legible characters, that we can be in no danger of miſtaking them; and to plead, that what he hath purpoſed and ſpoken concerning them may be fulfilled in the moſt ſpeedy and effectual manner. In a word, whatever is conducive to the preſent glory of the Redeemer, and the proſperity of his kingdom upon earth, may juſtly be comprehended in this petition; and it will never ceaſe to be of uſe in the church, till all the Redeemer's enemies are made his footſtool; and then it ſhall be exchanged for that triumphant ſong (Rev. xii. 10.), " Now is come ſalvation, and " ſtrength, and the kingdom of our God, " and the power of his Chriſt. Alleluia! " for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth. " Let us be glad, and rejoice, and give

" honour to him; for the marriage of the " Lamb is come, and his wife hath made " herſelf ready," (Rev. xix. 6, 7.)

Thus have I endeavoured to give you a ſhort account of the ſenſe and import of this petition.—Let us now proceed, in the

Second place, To conſider more largely, what may reaſonably be expected from us in conſequence of our uſing it; or rather, indeed, what is abſolutely neceſſary to prove that we are ſincere when we thus pray, " Thy kingdom come."—And,

1*ſt*, It is neceſſary that we ſhould become the ſubjects of this kingdom, not in name only, but in deed and in truth, otherwiſe we cannot wiſh the proſperity and advancement of it.

This King of Zion, who ſways a ſceptre of grace over thoſe who cordially ſubmit to him, is likewiſe armed with a rod of iron, to daſh in pieces his obſtinate enemies; and therefore, to all ſuch, his coming muſt be moſt terrible; and neither their inclination nor intereſt will ſuffer them to deſire it. No man can wiſh the increaſe of a power which

which he knows to be oppoſite to him, eſpecially when the oppoſition is ſo great, and the difference ſo irreconcileable, as that which ſubſiſts between the kingdom of Chriſt and the kingdom of Satan; for the one muſt neceſſarily be built upon the ruins of the other.

Let us then, my brethren, throw down the weapons of our rebellion, and yield ourſelves to this gracious Sovereign; and then the increaſe of his power ſhall become the matter of our joy. Let us invite him into our hearts, and erect a throne for him there; or rather, let us beſeech him to erect one for himſelf, to caſt down every thing within us that would exalt itſelf againſt his authority, and to take the full and perpetual poſſeſſion of our ſouls. Let us unfeignedly accept of him, in the whole extent of his office as Mediator; that ſtanding related to him as the members of his body, we may derive from him wiſdom and righteouſneſs, and ſanctification, and every thing neceſſary to our complete redemption. Let us ſecure to ourſelves a title to the protection and privileges of his

government, by ſubmitting to the laws and conſtitutions of it; and then it will become eaſy and natural to us, to pray for the proſperity of a kingdom to which we belong, and the glory of a Sovereign, who employs all his power and authority for our good.—A

2*d* duty incumbent upon us, in conſequence of our uſing this petition, is to endeavour, by all the methods we can, to perſuade others likewiſe to become the ſubjects of this kingdom.

Many, indeed, call Chriſt, "Lord, Lord; but few," alas! "do the things which he "ſays:—they profeſs that they know God, "while in works they deny him,—being "abominable, and diſobedient, and to every "good work reprobate." And ſhall not this move our pity and compaſſion? can we look around us, even within the limits of the viſible church, and ſee human nature expoſed in every deformed and ſickly ſhape? Can we behold multitudes of men, who are called by the name of Jeſus, counteracting the moſt ſacred obligations of conſcience, and even pouring contempt upon the

the only Saviour of loſt ſinners? Can we ſee all this, I ſay, and not afford our helping hand? Do we pray that the kingdom of God may come, and will we do nothing to introduce it into the hearts of others, who by nature are not leſs diſpoſed to entertain it, than we ourſelves once were? If we are ſincere in uſing this petition, let us ſhow our ſincerity, by our endeavours to obtain what we aſk. Let us labour, with all our might, to awaken poor ſinners to a ſenſe of their danger, that they may fly to the protection of that merciful Saviour, who hath expreſsly ſaid, "Him that cometh "unto me, I will in no wiſe caſt out," (John, vi. 37.)

Various are the means which may be uſed for this purpoſe: I ſhall mention one, which all of us may employ, and that is, a holy and exemplary life. There is grandeur and majeſty in the image of God, which exacts homage to itſelf from every heart. There is ſomething within us, which, in ſpite of our degeneracy, confeſſes and approves of what is right; truth in our ſpeech; juſtice and honeſty in our com-

merce with others; patience under affliction, and pity to the afflicted; a generous contempt of the world, and a readineſs to do good to all. Theſe are virtues which the worſt of men ſecretly honour, and the practice of them explains them better, and enforces them more, than words can do. Would we then prevail with men to become Chriſtians indeed, let us draw out Chriſtianity in our lives, and make it viſible to their eyes, and it will ſpeak for itſelf more intelligibly and convincingly than we can do; for men, by beholding it, will ſee at once, that it is not only excellent, but, by the grace of God, practicable too. This is an argument that hath more perſuaſion in it than any other can have: and then it is recommended to us by our Lord himſelf (Matth. v. 16.), "Let your light "ſo ſhine before men, that they may ſee "your good works, and glorify your Father "which is in heaven."

3*dly*, If we ſincerely deſire the proſperity and advancement of Chriſt's external kingdom, we will manifeſt this by our endeavours to ſupport and maintain it where it

is

is already eſtabliſhed, eſpecially among ourſelves.

This is an evidence which may reaſonably be expected from us; and, indeed, without it, all our profeſſions of love to the Redeemer, and of zeal for his glory, muſt paſs for vain and flattering pretences, which deſerve no credit. We only mock God, when we pray that the religion of his Son may become univerſal, and fill the whole earth, if at the ſame time we do not diſcover, by our conduct, a hearty concern for its continuance in our own land; yea, if we do not actually reſiſt and oppoſe all attempts whatever to carry it away from us.

It hath pleaſed God to diſtinguiſh us by our religious privileges above moſt other nations in the world. They were purchaſed by our fathers, with the expence of much blood and treaſure; and it would be highly criminal in us to reſign them tamely, but far more to throw them away with our own hands: yet forgive me to ſay, that they are chargeable with a crime not leſs than this, who either openly attempt, or ſecretly wiſh, to bring one to the throne of theſe kingdoms,

doms, whoſe principles oblige him to pull down what we apprehend to be the kingdom of Chriſt, and to carry us back to that Antichriſtian ſlavery, from which we have ſo happily eſcaped.

There is ſuch a manifeſt inconſiſtency between this petition and the practice of ſuch people, that it is ſurpriſing they do not obſerve it; and it muſt appear ſtill more wonderful, when we conſider, that the perſons who are chiefly chargeable with this inconſiſtency among us, cannot be ſuppoſed ignorant of the meaning of this excellent prayer, which, by their own ordinances, they oblige themſelves to uſe ſo frequently, and even preſs as a neceſſary form upon others. But ſurely to pronounce the words of it cannot be of ſuch efficacy as to atone for actions which contradict the ſenſe of it; nor indeed do I ſuppoſe that they expect this from it. I rather believe, that inveterate prejudice and ſtrong deluſion hinder many of them to perceive this obvious inconſiſtency.

But let us, my brethren, "ſtand faſt in "that liberty wherewith Chriſt hath made

"us

" us free, and not ſuffer ourſelves to be in-
" tangled again with the yoke of bondage."
Let us ſhow our ſincerity in uſing this petition, by reſiſting all attempts to remove the candleſtick from among ourſelves: let us bleſs God for the religious privileges we enjoy, and not ſuffer them to be violently wreſted out of our hands, under any pretence whatever: let us not even expoſe them to the ſmalleſt danger, but guard them as the moſt valuable part of our property; and eſpecially, let us be careful ſo to improve them, that we may never provoke God himſelf to deprive us of them.—In the

4*th* and *laſt* place, Let us extend our regards to thoſe dark and miſerable corners of the earth, which are full of the habitations of cruelty and wickedneſs.

Let us not only pray, that the goſpel may be ſent to them; but let us do what we can to make our prayers effectual, by embracing every opportunity which the providence of God affords us, of conveying to them this ineſtimable bleſſing. It is our honour and happineſs to have a Society for propagating Chriſtian Knowledge erected among

among us by royal letters patent (and countenanced by an annual donation from his Majeſty of L. 1000 Sterling), whoſe buſineſs it is to attend to this very thing. The progreſs they have already made, is at once a convincing proof of their fidelity, and a manifeſt token of the divine favour and acceptance: hitherto, indeed, their pious endeavours have been moſtly laid out in the remote and barbarous parts of our own native land, though they have not been wholly confined to theſe. They have been enabled to employ ſome miſſionaries abroad; of whoſe ſucceſs among the Indians, eſpecially of late, they have received ſuch agreeable accounts, as gives the delightful proſpect of a large acceſſion to the kingdom of our Redeemer. The fields are already growing white in thoſe parts, and promiſe a rich and plentiful harveſt, were more labourers employed to gather it.

Here then is an opportunity, which God, in his Providence, affords us of obtaining the anſwer of our own prayer. By this Society, he demands a proof of our ſincerity, and, as it were, offers us the honour to become

come fellow-workers with himſelf, in gaining new ſubjects to his Son. Let us with thankfulneſs embrace the offer, and contribute as liberal an aſſiſtance as we can, for carrying on this glorious deſign.

You muſt all be ſenſible, that your ſubſtance cannot be employed to a better purpoſe, nor indeed laid out in a way more truly advantageous to yourſelves. This is charity to the ſouls of men, and, in the nobleſt ſenſe, "lending to the Lord" (Prov. xix. 17.), who will not fail to repay with uſury.

This is a certain way of laying "up "for yourſelves treaſures in heaven, where "there is no corrupting moth nor ruſt, and "where thieves cannot break through to "ſteal." What is thus devoted to the immediate ſervice of the Redeemer, can never be loſt to the giver, but ſhall deſcend in ſhowers of bleſſings upon his own head. "The liberal ſoul ſhall be made fat, and he "who watereth ſhall be watered alſo him-"ſelf," (Prov. xi. 25.)

Such liberality will afford us, in the mean time, a moſt refined and delicate pleaſure; an enjoyment not confined to a day, but which

which lives and improves by reflection: and then it ſhall be amply recompenſed at the reſurrection of the juſt (Dan. xii. 3), "When they that are wiſe ſhall ſhine as the "brightneſs of the firmament, and they that "turn many unto righteouſneſs, as the ſtars "for ever and ever."

Yea, this will bring down the bleſſing of God upon our land; the vigorous proſecution of this noble deſign will be a better defence to us, than the moſt potent fleets or numerous armies, as it will engage the Lord of Hoſts on our ſide, "who will be a "wall of fire about us, and the glory in the "midſt of us."

But I hope I need not multiply arguments to perſuade you to ſo reaſonable a duty: the glory of the Redeemer, the ſalvation of precious and immortal ſouls, our own preſent and eternal intereſt, all unite their force in exciting us to it. Let us then, whilſt we pray, "Thy kingdom come," do every thing in our ſphere that may contribute to promote it; and then ſhall we triumph in eternal glory, when the body of Chriſt ſhall be completed. *Amen.*

SER-

SERMON XII.

PSALM li. 18.

Do good in thy good pleaſure unto Zion: build thou the walls of Jeruſalem.

THERE is an advice becoming the wiſdom of Solomon (in Eccl. v. 2.), "Be "not raſh with thy mouth, and let not "thine heart be haſty to utter any thing "before God: for God is in heaven, and "thou upon earth: therefore let thy words "be few." To pray to the moſt high God is a very ſolemn thing, even when we view him as ſeated on a throne of mercy. He is always preſent with us, whether we think of him or not: but when we pray, we, by our own deed, place ourſelves in his ſight, and ſolicit his attention. And is not this a very ſolemn and awful thought? We ſpeak to one who looks immediately into the heart,

heart, and who requireth " truth in the in-" ward parts." Nay, we appeal to him as the ſearcher of hearts, for the truth of every word which we utter before him, and challenge his omniſcience to take cognizance, whether what we ſay doth not expreſs the real ſentiments and deſires of our hearts. I ſay, *the deſires of our hearts;* for theſe, and not the language in which we clothe them, are our prayers to God. Nay, the better the words are which we uſe in prayer, the more inſolent is the profanation, if they are not animated by the deſires which they ought to expreſs. Too many are apt to imagine, that they have ſucceeded well in the exerciſes of devotion, if they have been able to addreſs God by his proper titles, and to recollect thoſe words, indited by the Spirit of God, in which holy men of old expreſſed their deſires, and which they committed to writing for the uſe of the church. But they do not conſider, that the very end for which thoſe accepted prayers were recorded, was, to regulate our hearts inſtead of directing our lips; and that it is our moſt immediate buſineſs, when ſuch peti-

tions occur to our minds, to try our hearts by them, that we may truly feel what they expreſs, before we adventure to preſent them to God.

It is the character of hypocrites, whom God abhorreth, that they "draw near to "him with their mouths, and honour him "with their lips, while their hearts are far "from him." This is to add abuſe and inſult to all their other ſins; and thoſe prayers which have proceeded from feigned lips, will, in the great day of judgment, ſtop the mouths of tranſgreſſors more effectually, than all the other offences with which they ſhall be found chargeable.

The articles of a man's belief may not always be preſent to his mind; or at leaſt the practical inferences which may juſtly be drawn from them, may not be all ſo obvious, as to command his uniform attention. To counteract indeed a plain and poſitive law, is ſuch flagrant rebellion as admits of no excuſe: and yet even in this caſe, the ſinner may pretend to plead, in alleviation of his crime, that the law appeared to him

ſo ſtrict and rigorous, that he could not bring his mind to conſent to its demands.

But what evaſion can a man find for contradicting his own prayers? Or what ſhall he be able to anſwer, when God ſhall ſay to him, "Out of thine own mouth do I "condemn thee, thou wicked ſervant?" Every requeſt which we make to God, is not only an explicit declaration, that we highly eſteem, and ardently deſire the benefits we aſk, but likewiſe implies an obligation on our part, to put ourſelves in the way of receiving what we aſk, and to uſe all the means in our own power to obtain it. When therefore we do not endeavour to obtain the bleſſings which we aſk, we plainly declare that we do not heartily deſire them. And by aſking what we do not deſire to obtain, we make it evident that we are preſumptuous diſſemblers, who uſe greater freedom with the all-perfect Being, than we dare to uſe with any of our fellow mortals, who is poſſeſſed of ſufficient power to reſent ſuch unworthy and abuſive treatment.

I have juſt now read to you a prayer of the

the royal Pſalmiſt, which none of us, I ſuppoſe, will heſitate to adopt. It conſiſts of two diſtinct petitions; the one reſpecting the ſpiritual, the other the temporal, proſperity of the people over which the providence of God had placed him. And it will readily occur to you, that both theſe important intereſts of the nation to which we belong, are recommended to our attention in the royal proclamation which hath brought us together this day *. What I propoſe in the following diſcourſe, is to make a few remarks,

Firſt, On the matter of David's prayer.

Secondly, On the order obſerved in the petitions contained in it.

Thirdly, On the temper of mind with which this prayer appears to have been accompanied. I will then ſhow what is incumbent on thoſe who addreſs the ſame requeſts to God, in order to prove the uprightneſs of their hearts, and that they ſincerely wiſh to obtain what they aſk.

* Preached *December* 12. 1776, being the firſt public Faſt after the commencement of the American war.

I begin with the matter of David's prayer: "Do good in thy good pleaſure unto "Zion: build thou the walls of Jeruſa-"lem"

The firſt of theſe petitions hath an obvious reference to the tribes of Iſrael, conſidered in their ſpiritual ſtate, as a religious community, or the true church of God. To thoſe who are acquainted with the language of Scripture, it will not be needful to prove, that this is the common acceptation of the term Zion, when it is uſed in diſtinction from Jeruſalem. Zion was the unalterable ſtation of the tabernacle, the city of David, and the emblem of that ſpiritual kingdom which David's Son and Lord was to erect in future times. The bleſſing prayed for by the Pſalmiſt is, that it would pleaſe God to do good unto Zion.

This ſhort, but comprehenſive requeſt, in the mouth of a Britiſh and Proteſtant Chriſtian, includes more particulars than the limits of one diſcourſe will permit me to enumerate. I ſhall ſelect a few leading petitions, in which all who come under this deſcription will cordially unite; namely,

That

That God, of his infinite mercy, may eſtabliſh and perpetuate what his own right hand wrought for us in the days of our fathers, at the two illuſtrious æras of the Reformation from Popery, and what is juſtly ſtyled the Glorious Revolution: That the word of the Lord may have free courſe, and be glorified in theſe lands, as long as the ſun and moon endure: That the great truths of the goſpel of Chriſt may be faithfully publiſhed, and ſucceſsfully defended, both againſt the attacks of open enemies, and the ſecret artifices of thoſe who lie in wait to deceive: That the ordinances of religion may not only be diſpenſed in purity, but may be accompanied with power, and rendered effectual for the conviction of ſinners, and for building up ſaints in holineſs and comfort, through faith unto ſalvation: That the wickedneſs of the wicked may come to an end, and the juſt be eſtabliſhed: That the ſpirit of diviſion may ceaſe, and that the whole multitude of believers may be of one heart and one ſoul, "following after the "things which make for peace, and things "whereby one may edify another." In

ſine, that our Zion may be a "quiet habi-
"tation, and a tabernacle that ſhall not be
"taken down, none of the ſtakes whereof
"ſhall be removed, neither any of the
"cords broken: that God may appoint ſal-
"vation for walls and bulwarks to her, and
"be himſelf the glory in the midſt of her:"
"Clothing her prieſts with righteouſneſs,
"that all her ſaints may ſhout aloud for
"joy." In theſe, and ſuch particulars, con-
ſiſteth the good of Zion. "Chriſt loved his
"church, and gave himſelf for it, that he
"might ſanctify and cleanſe it with the
"waſhing of water by the Word, that he
"might preſent it to himſelf a glorious
"church, not having ſpot or wrinkle, or
"any ſuch thing, that it might be holy and
"without blemiſh." For this end he lived,
and for this end he died, "That he might
"redeem us from all iniquity, and purify
"unto himſelf a peculiar people, zealous of
"good works"

The other petition contained in the text,
"build thou the walls of Jeruſalem," hath
a referrence to the civil ſtate of the Jews as
a commonwealth or kingdom, and is a
prayer

prayer for their national ſafety and proſperity.

This requeſt, like the former, comprehends a great variety of particulars.

It will be readily admitted, that a form of government, by which the natural rights of men are moſt effectually ſecured, and in which the impartial adminiſtration of eſtabliſhed laws guards the life, the liberty, and the property of the meaneſt individual, may, without ſtraining the metaphor, be included in the idea of *walls* and bulwarks, which contribute at once to the defence and ornament of a city. With regard to the "walls or bulwarks" of our civil conſtitution, it gives me pleaſure to acknowledge, that they are not only entire, but in ſeveral reſpects more fair and durable than thoſe of any other nation upon earth. In other lands, the walls of government are built on the ſurrender of ſome of the moſt precious rights of human nature: But in this happy country, we have not bought the protection of government at ſo dear a rate; nor is the hard hand of the oppreſſor either felt or feared by the meaneſt member

of the community. And muſt not the heart of that man then be hard and unfeeling, who doth not wiſh and pray that ſuch an invaluable conſtitution may be built up, and preſerved entire to lateſt generations?

But the expreſſion uſed in the text, calls upon us to look with weeping eyes and ſorrowful hearts, upon that awful rent in the Britiſh empire, which is the immediate occaſion of our meeting together at this time. We have ſeen a cloud riſe out of the weſt, at firſt no bigger than a man's hand, but, like that which the Prophet's ſervent ſaw, it hath overſpread the face of heaven, and carried tempeſt and deſolation in its progreſs. When I mention this great calamity, I do not mean to fix your attention on it as an object which preſents nothing to our view but complicated diſtreſs and danger. Much as I diſapprove of that levity which "deſpiſeth the chaſtening of "the Lord," I am yet no friend to that deſpondency which would make us "faint "when we are rebuked of him." The ſame expreſſion in my text, which reminds

us

us of the alarming breach which we deplore, doth at the ſame time lead us to look beyond and above it, to him who is able to repair it; to that God who "hath the "hearts of all men in his hands, and "turneth them as the rivers of water." With him it is a ſmall matter, not only to fill up the gap which hath ſeparated Great Britain from her American colonies; but if it ſeem good in his ſight, he can, with infinite eaſe, make this temporary ſeparation the occaſion and the means of eſtabliſhing a firm and permanent union: an union which neither political artifice, nor ſelfiſh ambition, nor the pride of independence, will be able to diſſolve. This is the deſirable iſſue to which our wiſhes may lawfully direct us, when we pray in the language of the royal Pſalmiſt, "Build thou "the walls of Jeruſalem."

Having made theſe remarks on the import of David's requeſts, let us attend, in the

Second place, To the order in which they are placed. He begins with praying for the

the good of Zion, and then offers his ſupplication in behalf of Jeruſalem. Nor is this an accidental or arbitrary arrangement. The ſame ſubordination of temporal to ſpiritual bleſſings, is uniformly obſerved through the whole of the ſacred record, both in the promiſes of God, and in the accepted prayers of his people: and it deſerves our notice, that, in this order, we are called upon by his Majeſty's proclamation, to conduct the devotional exerciſes of this day. For, previous to any particular requeſt reſpecting the political ſtate of the Britiſh empire, we are admoniſhed by our gracious Sovereign, "To humble ourſelves "before Almighty God, on account of our "ſins; to implore his pardon, and to ſend "up, in the moſt devout and ſolemn man-"ner, our prayers and ſupplications to the "divine Majeſty, for averting thoſe heavy "judgments which our manifold ſins and "provocations have moſt juſtly deſerved."

It may be remembered by ſome now preſent, that in the year 1759, when Great Britain ſat as Queen among the nations, we were called together by a proclamation

from the Throne, to return public thanks to Almighty God, for the great and public bleſſings which enriched and diſtinguiſhed that memorable year.

It was then my object, to warm my fellow-citizens againſt the criminal abuſe of our national felicity, by perverting, into weapons of rebellion againſt God, the fruits of that ſucceſs with which he had been pleaſed to favour us.

Since that time, we have enjoyed a period of very uncommon proſperity as a kingdom. While riches have been flowing to us from all quarters, luxury and diſſipation, advancing with an equal pace, have proved at once the propriety and the neglect of that warning. Enormous fortunes, ſuddenly acquired in our foreign ſettlements, have accelerated that corruption of manners, which is the uſual concomitant of proſperity. Succeſsful adventurers, coming home with ſums almoſt beyond the calculation of a moderate mind, produce a diſdain of the ſlow and ſober paths of induſtry: and "men haſtening to be rich, fall into "temptation, and a ſnare, and into many "fooliſh

"foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown "them in destruction and perdition." Our table hath indeed become our snare; and the uncommon blessings conferred on us, instead of heightening our gratitude, have only caused us to forget the hand that bestowed them, and proved the means of alienating our hearts from God.

For this abuse of prosperity, the land doth mourn this day. They must be blind indeed, who do not see the uplifted hand of God, and even read, on the rod with which he hath smitten us, our national guilt engraved in such deep and legible characters, that it may truly be said, "Our own "wickedness hath corrected us, and our "backslidings have reproved us."

Do we complain of the ingratitude of our American colonies, which flourished so long, and prospered so much in a state of union with the mother-country, and as the free subjects of a free state? In what words can we utter our complaints more expressive, than those which are pre-occupied, if I may so speak, by the great Lord of heaven and earth, in that solemn appeal which is recorded

(Isaiah,

(Iſaiah i. 2), "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, "O earth, for I have nouriſhed and brought "up children, and they have rebelled againſt "me." So that the very expreſſions with which we would naturally reproach our rebellious coloniſts, may juſtly remind us of that more aggravated rebellion, wherewith we ourſelves are chargeable againſt that God, who hath not only planted, but cheriſhed and protected us in a good land unto this day.

Now whatſoever things were written aforetime, were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. God is always the ſame. He is in one mind, and none can turn him. His love to righteouſneſs, and his hatred of ſin, are both unchangeable; and therefore, the truth of that aſſertion muſt be equally unchangeable, that righteouſneſs exalteth a nation: whereas ſin is the reproach, and without repentance muſt, in the iſſue, be the ruin of any people. Would we then pray with acceptance for the peace and proſperity of our Jeruſalem, let us begin with praying for the good of Zion; that it

may

may pleaſe God to pour down the ſpirit of repentance and reformation on men of every rank. Until we thus turn to God, ſolid proſperity will not return to our land. There may be gleams of tranſient ſucceſs: but theſe interruptions of calamity will only aggravate our final doom. Whereas, if we ſincerely repent of our evil ways, and return to that God from whom we have revolted, he will ſtay his hand, now lifted up in wrath, "and God, even our own "God, ſhall bleſs us."—"Behold the hand "of the Lord is not ſhortened that it can- "not ſave, neither is his ear heavy, that it "cannot hear; but our iniquities have ſe- "parated between us and our God." We have a moſt gracious and explicit promiſe to encourage us (Jerem. xviii. 7, 8), "At "what inſtant (ſaith God), I ſhall ſpeak "concerning a nation and concerning a "kingdom, to pluck up and to pull down, "and to deſtroy it: if that nation againſt "whom I have pronounced, turn from "their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them."

Here then is a large field, in which every man

man may labour for the good of his country. In this view, the meaneſt ſubject has the conſolation to think, that he may become uſeful to the community with which he is connected. The meaneſt ſubject may ſo order his life and converſation, as to render himſelf, in the eyes of his Maker, one of the "excellent ones of the earth," one of that "holy ſeed which is the ſub-"ſtance of the land." The meaneſt ſubject may put up the fervent ſupplications of a pious, pure, and humble ſoul, to the throne of grace; and with that holy ardour, which alone will find acceptance, ſolicit the Supreme Diſpoſer of all events, for bleſſings and benefits of every kind to his country. The meaneſt ſubject can "walk with God" in the duties of devotion, can diſplay the beauty of holineſs, and ſtir up others to imitate the example of his virtue and piety.

Thus far I have conſidered both the matter and the order of the two petitions in my text.—The

Third thing propoſed was, To make ſome practical obſervations on the temper of mind with

with which they appear to have been accompanied. And it is obvious, in general, that David had a juſt impreſſion of his abſolute dependence on God, and that he did not truſt in the arm of fleſh, but looked for help from God alone. No man poſſeſſed larger meaſures than David, either of political wiſdom or warlike ſkill; but he did not confide in his own talents for building or defending the walls of Jeruſalem: He knew, as he expreſſeth it in another of his pſalms, that "except the Lord build the "houſe, they labour in vain that build it; "and except the Lord watch the city, the "watchmen waketh in vain." He therefore looks directly to the God of Zion, and commits Jeruſalem, and her walls, to his keeping, who neither ſlumbers nor ſleeps, even the Creator of the ends of the earth, who fainteth not, neither is weary.

The form of his addreſs doth likewiſe diſcover the deep conviction he had of his own unworthineſs. He pleads with God, as a humble ſupplicant, with that penitent and contrite heart of which he ſpeaks in the verſe preceding my text. He claims

nothing upon the terms of juſtice, but applies ſolely to the mercy and free favour of God. "Do good," ſaith he, "*in thy good pleaſure*, "unto Zion."

This expreſſion may be further conſidered, as denoting that ſubmiſſive and reſigned frame of ſpirit with which he put up his requeſts both for Zion and Jeruſalem. He did not preſume to limit the Holy One of Iſrael; but left it entirely to his own wiſdom and goodneſs, to grant the matter of his prayer at what time, and in what manner, or by what means, he ſhould chooſe.

In all theſe reſpects, he preſents to our view an approved example for our imitation in ſimilar circumſtances.

It now only remains, that I ſhould inquire what is incumbent on thoſe who adopt the Pſalmiſt's prayer, in order to prove the uprightneſs of their hearts, and that they ſincerely wiſh to obtain what they aſk.

I obſerved, in the introduction to this diſcourſe, that every requeſt which we make to God, is not only an explicit declaration, that we highly eſteem, and ardently deſire,

the benefits which we pray for, but doth likewiſe imply an obligation and promiſe on our part to uſe all the means in our power to obtain them.

As to what concerns the public ſtate of the nation, and the means of building up and cementing the walls of our Jeruſalem, theſe matters I leave to thoſe who have the conſtitutional charge of them. The beſt aid I can contribute in my ſphere, is to pray for wiſdom to direct the public counſels, and to do what I can for the good of Zion; and in this you all may and ought to be workers together with me. If, then, we have any love for our country, or any ſincere deſire of ſaving her from impending calamity, let us now form hearty and vigorous reſolutions of correcting and amending our ways. Let our reformation begin in thoſe points from which our corruption may be traced. Remember, that piety towards God is the beſt ſupport of all thoſe virtues which form the good man or the uſeful citizen. Legiſlators may deviſe what regulations they pleaſe; but if there is no ſenſe of a God or of a providence among

among the ſubjects, they will never be able to execute their plans, or to attain their ends. Let perſonal reformation, therefore, be our firſt care; and having given all diligence to make our own calling and election ſure, let us, in our reſpective ſtations, join heart and hand to diſcourage vice in every form, and to promote the intereſts of pure and undefiled religion in our land.—Unleſs we do this, our national faſt, inſtead of aſcending to God with acceptance, will ſink down into the meaſure of national guilt, and will only haſten the execution of that fatal ſentence, "Put ye in the ſickle, for "the harveſt is ripe, the preſs is full, and "the fat overflows, for their wickedneſs is "great."—On the other hand, by turning to God through Jeſus Chriſt, and bringing forth fruits meet for repentance, we may not only avert thoſe heavy judgments with which we are threatened, but on ſcriptural grounds may take encouragement to hope, that God will return in mercy to Zion, and will yet make our Jeruſalem a praiſe in the earth. *Amen.*

SERMON XIII.

1 CORINTH. iv. 7. *

Who maketh thee to differ from another? and what haſt thou that thou didſt not receive?

IT is not to be ſuppoſed, that any perſon endowed with reaſon can be in ſuſpenſe for a moment about an anſwer to theſe queſtions. I am confident, that there is not one in this aſſembly who is not ready to reply,—It is God alone who maketh me to differ from any other; and I have nothing which I did not receive from his bountiful hand. No man who believes that God is, will heſitate to confeſs, with the Apoſtle James, that "every good gift, "and every perfect gift, is from above, and "cometh down from the Father of lights."

Yet

* Preached before the Managers of the Orphan Hoſpital of Edinburgh, *Auguſt* 7. 1775.

Yet ſo little attention is paid by the bulk of mankind to the conſequences of this commonly acknowledged truth, that I ſhall make no apology for employing the *firſt* part of my diſcourſe in reminding you of the evidence by which it is ſupported:—I ſhall *then* lay before you ſome of thoſe practical leſſons, equally obvious and important, which with eaſe and certainty may be deduced from it:—And *conclude* with that improvement of the ſubject which hath a more immediate reference to the occaſion of our preſent meeting together at this time.

Firſt, I begin with reminding you, that every bleſſing we poſſeſs is the gift of God, and that we have nothing which we did not receive from him.

That this is the caſe with reſpect to natural endowments, will readily be admitted. Men are apt enough to boaſt of the improvement of their faculties; but the faculties themſelves are univerſally acknowledged to be the gifts of God. "There is a "ſpirit in man," ſaid Elihu in the book of

Job, " and the inſpiration of the Almighty " giveth him underſtanding." A quick apprehenſion, a retentive memory, a lively imagination, and other mental powers, theſe are favours which the great Author of our being diſpenſeth to whom, and in what meaſure, it pleaſeth him; and never was any man ſo arrogant as to pretend, that he beſtowed theſe qualities upon himſelf.

It is no leſs evident, that the light of divine revelation is an additional bleſſing, which flows immediately from the ſame fountain of beneficence; according to that grateful acknowledgement of the Pſalmiſt, " He ſheweth his word unto Jacob, his ſta- " tutes and his judgments unto Iſrael: He " hath not dealt ſo with any nation." And we muſt be ſenſible, that it is purely owing to " the tender mercy of our God, that the " day-ſpring from on high hath viſited us, " to give light to us, whoſe fathers ſat in " darkneſs and in the ſhadow of death, to " guide our feet into the way of peace."

Nay, we are taught, that the virtue and efficacy of this external light muſt be wholly attributed to the bleſſing of God. This is plainly

plainly and ſtrongly aſſerted at the 6th and 7th verſes of the preceding chapter: "I "have planted, Apollos watered; but God "gave the increaſe. So then, neither is he "that planteth any thing, neither he that "watereth; but God that giveth the in-"creaſe."——"It pleaſed God," ſaith our Apoſtle, ſpeaking of himſelf, Gal. i. 15. "who ſeparated me from my mother's "womb, and called me by his grace, to re-"veal his Son in me." And in another part of his writings, "By the grace of God "I am what I am." Nor did theſe expreſ-ſions of humility take their riſe from the peculiar circumſtances of his own conver-ſion; for he applies the ſame principle to the Chriſtians at Corinth, and urgeth it as an argument againſt every degree of boaſt-ing or ſelf-attribution, 1 Cor. i. 26. &c. "For ye ſee your calling, brethren, how "that not many wiſe men after the fleſh, "not many mighty, not many noble, are "called. But God hath choſen the fooliſh "things of the world, to confound the "wiſe; and God hath choſen the weak "things of the world, to confound the

" things which are mighty; and baſe things
" of the world, and things which are deſpi-
" ſed, hath God choſen, yea, and things
" which are not, to bring to nought things
" that are: that no fleſh ſhould glory in his
" preſence." And then adds, " But of him
" are ye in Chriſt Jeſus, who of God is
" made unto us wiſdom, and righteouſneſs,
" and ſanctification, and redemption: that,
" according as it is written, He that glori-
" eth, let him glory in the Lord."

Were it neceſſary to deſcend to other particulars that might be named, it would be eaſy to ſhow, that all our advantages, of what kind ſoever, whether they belong to the body or outward eſtate, are equally derived from God, and dependent upon him. Hear what God ſaid to Moſes, Exod. iv. 11. " Who hath made man's mouth? or who
" maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the ſeeing,
" or blind? have not I the Lord?" How ſublime, and how juſt, were the ſentiments which Hannah expreſſed! 1 Sam. ii. 3. &c. " Talk no more ſo exceeding proudly, and
" let not arrogancy proceed out of your
" mouth: for the Lord is a God of know-
" ledge,

" ledge, and by him actions are weighed.—
" The Lord killeth, and maketh alive: He
" bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth
" up. The Lord maketh poor, and maketh
" rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up.
" He raiſeth up the poor out of the duſt,
" and lifteth up the beggar from the dung-
" hill, to ſet them among princes, and to
" make them inherit the throne of glory:
" for the pillars of the earth are the Lord's,
" and he hath ſet the world upon them."
And with what humble, but elevated devotion did David, in the height of his proſperity, aſcribe all that he poſſeſſed to the free bounty of God, when he bleſſed the Lord, and ſaid before all the congregation of the children of Iſrael, " Thine, O Lord, is the
" greatneſs, and the power, and the glory,
" and the victory, and the majeſty: for all
" that is in the heaven, and in the earth, is
" thine; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and
" thou art exalted as head above all. Both
" riches and honour come of thee, and thou
" reigneſt over all; and in thine hand is
" power and might, and in thine hand it is
" to make great, and to give ſtrength unto
" all,

" all. Now therefore, our God, we thank
" thee, and praiſe thy glorious name. But
" who am I, and what is my people, that
" we ſhould be able to offer ſo willingly af-
" ter this ſort? for all things come of thee,
" and of thine own have we given thee.—
" O Lord our God, all this ſtore that we
" have prepared to build thee an houſe for
" thy name, cometh of thine hand, and is
" all thine own."

I might quote many other paſſages to the ſame purpoſe; but you have heard enough to ſatisfy you, that I am ſupported by the higheſt authority when I ſay, that all the bleſſings we poſſeſs are the gifts of God, the effects of his free and unmerited liberality.

This doctrine, as I obſerved in the entrance, hath none of the charms of *novelty* to recommend it. But is it on that account leſs needful to be inſiſted upon? Moſt aſſuredly it is not. I believe we ſhall find, upon inquiry, that the moſt obvious truths are univerſally the leaſt regarded, and therefore have moſt need to be frequently brought in view, that men may be conſtrained to beſtow

beſtow ſome attention upon them, and to conſider the influence they ought to have upon their temper and conduct. I am afraid that we judge of ſpiritual things in the ſame abſurd manner that we judge of temporal things; I mean, that we put a fanciful value upon them, and do not rate them according to their intrinſic worth and real uſefulneſs.

We ſee every day, that earthly things are eſtimated, not by their uſe, but by their ſcarcity; inſomuch that, in common language, the words *rare* and *precious* are convertible terms; though, in fact, the things that are truly precious, becauſe moſt neceſſary, inſtead of being rare, are ſcattered abroad with the greateſt profuſion. Thus doth God diſpenſe temporal benefits; the beſt, that is, the moſt uſeful, are univerſally given out in greateſt abundance. And it may juſtly be affirmed, that ſpiritual bleſſings are diſpenſed in the ſame way. The moſt comprehenſive bleſſing, the *unſpeakable* gift of Jeſus Chriſt, is of all others the moſt free and liberal, being offered, "without "money and without price," to every ſinner

ner of mankind without exception; and actually conferred upon all who, feeling their need of a Saviour, are made willing to receive and reſt upon him alone for pardon, and peace, and complete ſalvation. In like manner, the great rules of duty, and the truths that are beſt adapted to purify our hearts and reform our practice, are diſperſed as it were around us in the greateſt plenty and variety. God, who hath appointed our work, hath likewiſe limited the ſeaſon for doing it; and therefore, that we may not loſe a moment, the moſt uſeful and neceſſary inſtruments of action are laid ſo near us, that we need only ſtretch forth our hand to take hold of them. Were they placed at a diſtance, the opportunity of acting might frequently paſs away before the proper means and inſtruments were got ready. But ſuch wiſe and effectual proviſion is made, that no man ſhall have it in his power to plead this excuſe. If any piece of duty be left undone, it cannot be owing either to the want of a plain rule to direct our conduct, or of ſufficient arguments and encouragements to move us to action, but

to

to the inattention, or pride, or ſtubbornneſs, of our own hearts.

This affords a glorious diſplay of the wiſdom and goodneſs of our great Lawgiver and Judge. But alas! we thwart his merciful intentions. Overlooking what is near, we roam abroad in queſt of other things, that lie at the remoteſt diſtance from us, and have the feebleſt influence upon our temper and practice. Such is our folly and perverſeneſs, that, deſpiſing the moſt important truths, becauſe they are common and obvious, we run away in the vain purſuit of abſtruſe and intricate ſpeculations, which have no other effect than to puzzle the head, or to warm the imagination, while they leave the heart dark, and cold, and inſenſible.

To correct this falſe taſte, by recalling mens attention to the moſt ſimple and practical truths, ought, in my apprehenſion, to be the principal aim of a goſpel-miniſter. When theſe have got full poſſeſſion of mens hearts, and appear in the fruits of a holy life, then, if we find leiſure, we may ſeek after new diſcoveries: but ſurely neceſſity

ſhould

ſhould have the firſt diſpoſal of our ſtudy and labour. Life is ſhort, and ſouls are precious; and therefore things of eternal conſequence ought in all reaſon to be preferred. They who chooſe to gratify the curious, by telling them new and ſtrange things, may indeed raiſe the reputation of their own *invention;* but they do it upon the ruins of a far more excellent thing,—I mean, that *charity* "which vaunteth not "itſelf, is not puffed up, and ſeeketh not "her own;" and as they have no higher aim than to ſerve themſelves, it is but juſt they ſhould be left to reward themſelves as they can.

We are commanded in Scripture, to be "*ready* to every good work;" that is, to be in ſuch an habitual poſture for ſervice, that with facility we may enter upon action ſo ſoon as an opportunity preſents itſelf. But we ſhall never acquire this promptneſs and facility, till the mind be furniſhed with ſome fruitful principles of action; and the more ſimple and obvious theſe principles are, the more readily will they occur to us, and the greater authority and

influence will attend them. Of this kind is the propoſition I have been endeavouring to illuſtrate. The truth of it is obvious to the meaneſt capacity; and yet ſuch is its fruitfulneſs and energy, that ſome of the ſublimeſt duties of the Chriſtian life are virtually included in it, and may with eaſe and certainty be deduced from it.

To ſelect ſome of theſe practical leſſons, was the ſecond thing propoſed; to which I now proceed.

1*ſt*, If all the bleſſings we poſſeſs be the gifts of God, the effects of his free and unmerited bounty, then ſurely we ought to be *humble*. This is the particular improvement which the Apoſtle directs us to make of this doctrine in the cloſe of my text: "Who maketh thee to differ from another? "and what haſt thou that thou didſt not "receive? *Now if thou didſt receive it, why "doſt thou glory, as if thou hadſt not recei-"ved it?*"

This reaſoning is ſo plain and ſimple, that a child may underſtand it; and yet ſo perfectly juſt, that it will abide the ſevereſt trial;

trial; nay, the more accurately it is examined, the ſtronger will it appear. Did we keep this ſingle principle in our eye, that it is God *who maketh us to differ*, that alone might be ſufficient to give a check to our pride, and to inſpire us with humility. Did we view all our preſent advantages as gifts freely beſtowed, to which we had no previous title or claim; then every additional bleſſing would only remind us of our indigence before we received it; and the greater and more numerous the benefits conferred upon us were, the greater debtors ſhould we judge ourſelves, the more deeply ſhould we feel our dependence upon God, and the leſs diſpoſed ſhould we be to glory in ourſelves.

2*dly*, From the ſame principle, and with equal eaſe and certainty, we may deduce our obligation to *thankfulneſs* and praiſe. Humility and gratitude, theſe kindred graces, which conſtitute the proper temper of a Chriſtian, are inſeparable companions. They give mutual aid and ſupport to each other, and both take their riſe from the perſuaſion of this truth. For how can we think

of our kind and unwearied benefactor, who condescends to make us the objects of his care, who daily loads us with benefits, though he is altogether independent of us, and can neither be enriched by our services, nor impoverished by the want of them;— how can we think of him, I say, without the most fervent love, and humble gratitude?

3*dly*, To humility and gratitude, I add *resignation* to the will of God. This was the inference which holy Job drew from the doctrine I have been illustrating: "Shall "we receive good at the hand of the Lord, "and shall we not receive evil also? The "Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, "blessed be the name of the Lord." Surely if no wrong be done us, we have no right to complain. We ought rather to adore that goodness which at first bestowed the gift, gave us the comfortable enjoyment of it, and continued it with us so long; and to say with the saints of old, when our distress is greatest, "I will bless the Lord at "all times; his praise shall continually be "in my mouth."—"Wherefore doth a li-

" ving man complain, a man for the pu-
" niſhment of his ſins?"—" It is the Lord,
" let him do what ſeemeth him good;"
and, " Good is the will of the Lord."

4thly, Did we attend to this truth, we ſhould not dare to employ any means that are unlawful for improving our circumſtances, or acquiring the good things that belong to a preſent world: and even in uſing the means that are lawful, we ſhould conſtantly look up to God for ſucceſs, and implore his bleſſing upon our honeſt endeavours; remembering, on the one hand, " that the getting of treaſures by lying lips, " is a vanity toſſed to and fro of them that " ſeek death; and, on the other hand, that " the bleſſing of the Lord maketh rich, and " he addeth no ſorrow with it." Which leads me to obſerve,

5thly, The importance of enjoying the bleſſing of God, with all the gifts which his bounty beſtows upon us. From this alone ariſeth their value, and nothing elſe can impart to them that ſweetneſs which renders the poſſeſſion of them truly deſirable. Happineſs cannot be extracted from the creatures

tures themſelves: they are all broken ciſterns that can hold no water: "The eye is "not ſatisfied with ſeeing, neither is the ear "filled with hearing."—"He that loveth ſil-"ver, ſhall not be ſatisfied with ſilver; nor "he that loveth abundance with increaſe." Solomon records it as one of the evils he had ſeen under the ſun, namely, "riches "kept for the owners thereof to their hurt." And he ſuppoſeth it a very poſſible caſe, that amidſt the greateſt abundance of earthly things, "a man may all his days eat in "darkneſs, and have much ſorrow, and "wrath with his ſickneſs." How awful is that threatening, Mal. ii. 2. "If ye will "not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart "to give glory unto my name, ſaith the "Lord of hoſts, I will even ſend a curſe "upon you, and I will curſe your bleſ-"ſings?" And when this threatening is executed upon any, then "their table be-"comes a ſnare to them; and that which "ſhould have been for their welfare, be-"comes a trap," inſomuch that their proſperity proves both the occaſion and inſtrument of their deſtruction: "Whereas the

" Lord bleſſeth the habitation of the juſt :" in conſequence whereof, " the little that a " righteous man hath, is better than the " riches of many wicked." It is a ſignificant ſaying of David, Pſal. xxxvii. 22. " Such " as be bleſſed of the Lord ſhall inherit the " earth." They hold their portion of it by a different tenure than other men; they poſſeſs it as the children of him who is Lord of all: and their Father, while he feeds them with food convenient for them, gives them at once the proper enjoyment, and the ſanctified uſe of it. This is the peculiar privilege of believers in Chriſt Jeſus; for " as many as receive him, to " them gives he power to become the ſons " of God, even to them that believe in his " name." And as the Apoſtle Paul reaſons, " If children, then are they alſo heirs, heirs " of God, and joint heirs with Chriſt Jeſus;" ſo that, in the moſt common bounties of providence, they can taſte the ſweetneſs of ſpecial love, and may lawfully conſider every benefit conferred upon them, as a token of their Father's affection, and a pledge of that fulneſs of joy that awaits them

them in a future ſtate. How much then doth it concern us, even as we regard our preſent comfort, " to give all diligence to " make our calling and election ſure," that, on every gift, whether ſmall or great, reading the precious name of him who beſtows it, we may have the true reliſh of the proviſion afforded us in the courſe of our journey through this ſtrange country, till we arrive at our Father's houſe above, where we ſhall obtain poſſeſſion of that glorious inheritance of the ſaints, which is incorruptible, and undefiled, and fadeth not away.

Theſe are a few of the practical leſſons, which, with eaſe and certainty, may be deduced from the doctrine of my text.

Permit me now to apply the ſubject to the particular occaſion of our meeting together at this time.

Hitherto I have been ſpeaking of the bleſſings we poſſeſs as gifts freely beſtowed. But there is another important light in which we ought likewiſe to view them. They are talents committed to us for ſpecial

ends and purpoſes; and it is both expected and required that we be diligent and faithful in improving them, as it becomes thoſe who muſt one day give an account of their ſtewardſhip.——There is an eſſential difference between God's giving to us, and our giving to our fellow-men. We renounce our intereſt in what we give to another: it ceaſeth to be ours, and becomes the property of the perſon upon whom we beſtow it. But God giveth nothing away after this manner. His giving to his creatures doth not make the benefit conferred a whit the leſs his own than it originally was. God is the entire and abſolute proprietor of all things: they are his, becauſe he made them; and what is ſtyled *property* among men, muſt neceſſarily be derived, limited, and dependent. This dominion is ſo eſſential to God, that he cannot diveſt himſelf of it. Earthly rulers may reſign part of the juriſdiction that belongs to them. Thus Saul proclaimed, that whoſoever ſhould fight Goliah the Philiſtine, and kill him, "he and his houſe ſhould be

"made

"made free in Iſrael."—But no creature can be releaſed from its obligation to ſerve God: for abſolute dependence and unlimited ſubjection are ſo intimately connected, that they cannot exiſt ſeparately. As we neceſſarily depend upon God, ſo we are neceſſarily bound to ſubmit to his authority, and to ſerve him to the utmoſt extent of the powers he hath given us. No creature can ſay of any thing he poſſeſſeth, This is fully mine, to diſpoſe of it as I pleaſe. The benefits conferred upon us, are ſo far our property, with reſpect to our fellow-ſervants, that, unleſs they can produce an order from the great Maſter of the family, none of them may take them from us, neither can they righteouſly poſſeſs them without our conſent: but, with regard to God, they ſtill belong to him, and are ours only for the ends and purpoſes he hath appointed. They were not given merely as an alms to the needy, but as inſtruments are given to a ſervant for doing his maſter's work. This is clearly expreſſed 1 Pet. iv. 10. "As every man hath received the gift, "even ſo miniſter the ſame one to another,

" as good ſtewards of the manifold grace " of God."

The nature of the gifts beſtowed upon men, plainly ſhow, that they were not intended for pomp, but for uſe: and it appears from the manner in which they are diſtributed, that none of them are beſtowed to gratify the pride of individuals, but to eſtabliſh ſuch a mutual connection and dependence, as may render every one in his place uſeful to the community. We have a lively illuſtration of this, 1 Cor. xii. 8. *et ſeq.* " To one is given by the Spirit, the " word of wiſdom: to another, the word of " knowledge by the ſame Spirit; to ano- " ther faith by the ſame Spirit; to another " the gifts of healing by the ſame Spirit; " to another the working of miracles; to " another prophecy; to another diſcerning " of ſpirits; to another divers kinds of " tongues; to another the interpretation of " tongues. But all theſe worketh that one " and the ſelf-ſame Spirit, dividing to every " man ſeverally as he will." Thus each hath his diſtinct office and uſe, that, as it is expreſſed ver. 25. " there ſhould be no " ſchiſm

" ſchiſm in the body; but that the ſeveral " members ſhould have the ſame care one " for another," and maintain mutual love, whilſt all in their way contribute to the good of the whole.—" The eye cannot ſay " unto the hand, I have no need of thee: " nor again the head to the feet, I have no " need of you." To every one ſomething is given, to recommend him to the reſpect of others; and from every one ſomething is with-held, to keep him modeſt and humble: for God hath ſo ordered the diſtribution of his benefits, that each may feel his need of that excellence which he hath not in poſſeſſion, and at the ſame time have the aid of thoſe gifts, by the miniſtry of others which he himſelf wants.

" The rich and the poor meet together," ſaith Solomon, " the Lord is the maker of " them both." Hence, " he that mocketh " the poor" is ſaid " to reproach his Maker;" that is, he throws an injurious reflection upon the wiſdom and goodneſs of divine providence, which hath appointed this inequality of conditions among men, for exerciſing, on the one hand, the patience and

and reſignation of the poor; and that the rich, on the other hand, may be furniſhed with conſtant opportunities of acknowledging their obligations to God, and their dependence upon him for all they poſſeſs, by diſtributing what they can ſpare from their own neceſſary uſes, for the relief and comfort of their needy brethren. That this is the proper improvement of wealth, and the purpoſe for which it is beſtowed, appears from Paul's direction to Timothy (1 Tim. vi. 17.), "Charge them that are "rich in this world, that they be not high-"minded, nor truſt in uncertain riches, "but in the living God, who giveth us all "things richly to enjoy: that they do "good, that they be rich in good works, "ready to diſtribute, willing to communi-"cate; laying up in ſtore for themſelves a "good foundation againſt the time to come, "that they may lay hold on eternal life." And how provoking it is to God, when men abuſe the gifts of his providence, we learn from that complaint and threatening (Hoſ. ii. 8, 9.), "She did not know that I "gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and "mul-

" multiplied her ſilver and gold, which " they prepared for Baal. Therefore will " I return, and take away my corn in the " time thereof, and my wine in the ſeaſon " thereof, and will recover my wool and my " flax given to cover her nakedneſs."

The application of theſe truths to the purpoſe for which we are at preſent aſſembled, is ſo obvious, that I am confident it muſt already have occurred to the moſt inattentive of my hearers. Were we to conſider the good things we poſſeſs, merely as gifts freely beſtowed, and left entirely to our own diſpoſal; yet gratitude ſhould prompt us to employ them in ſuch a way as might be moſt acceptable to our kind and generous Benefactor. But I am furniſhed, you now ſee, with a more perſuaſive argument: the plea of gratitude comes enforced with the claim of juſtice, while regard to our own intereſt ſolicits our compliance with their united demands: " For " we muſt all appear before the judgment-" ſeat of Chriſt, that every one may receive " the deeds done in his body, according to " that he hath done, whether it be good or " bad."

" bad." In that day, " unto whomſoever " much hath been given, of him alſo much " will be required:" and the unprofitable ſervant, who did not improve the talent committed to him, but buried it under ground, or wrapt it in a napkin, ſhall be caſt " into outer darkneſs: there ſhall be " weeping, and gnaſhing of teeth."

Seeing, then, theſe things are ſo, ought we not to reckon it an additional ground of thankfulneſs to God, when, beſides the favours conferred upon us, he is at any time pleaſed to afford us an opportunity of employing the fruits of his liberality in ſuch a manner as contributes moſt effectually to anſwer the higheſt and moſt important purpoſes for which they were beſtowed? An opportunity of this kind is juſt now preſented to you by the much to be reſpected Managers of the Orphan Hoſpital, at whoſe deſire I addreſs you this day. The objects of their care are there placed in your view: and ſurely to provide for the Chriſtian education of ſo many helpleſs children, and for their decent clothing and maintenance, till they be trained up to earn a ſubſiſtence

for

for themſelves, as it is an exerciſe of the trueſt mercy to them, ſo it cannot fail to be highly acceptable to that God who diſdains not to ſtyle himſelf the Father of the fatherleſs.

The peculiar excellencies of this ſpecies of charity were fully illuſtrated, on a former occaſion of this kind, from that prayer of the Pſalmiſt, in behalf of the Jewiſh nation (Pſal cxliv. 12.), "That our ſons may "be as plants grown up in their youth; "that our daughters may be as corner-"ſtones, poliſhed after the ſimilitude of a "palace*." Then it was ſhown, That a permanent proviſion for the Chriſtian education of deſtitute children, is a charity which tends to prevent miſery; and muſt therefore be preferable to that which only alleviates preſent diſtreſs, or procures it a ſhort and uncertain relief. This is charity to the ſouls of our fellow-creatures, and the nobleſt imitation of Him who came from heaven to earth, to ſeek and to ſave that

* Dr Erſkine's Sermon, preached before the Managers of the Orphan Hoſpital at Edinburgh, *May* 18. 1774.

that which was loſt. Beſides, it is a charity which, of all others, is in leaſt danger of being miſapplied or defeated. This renders the proſpect of doing good by it in the higheſt degree probable. And then its influence is of the largeſt extent; for while it ſerves to advance the glory of God, and the intereſts of pure and undefiled religion in the world, it promotes at the ſame time, in the moſt effectual manner, the ſpiritual improvement and happineſs of individuals, and even the temporal proſperity of the nation to which we belong.

To ſuch powerful recommendations any addition would be ſuperfluous. And they who, influenced by theſe motives, contribute according to their ability for the ſupport of an inſtitution ſo pious and ſalutary, may be aſſured, that what they give is, in the moſt proper ſenſe of Solomon's words, "lent to the Lord, and that which they give "will he pay them again."

Upon the whole, then, let it be our firſt care, to have our own hearts filled with love to God, as the Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and our Father in Chriſt; for unleſs

leſs this be the ſource of our charity to others, our beneficence may be profitable to them, but cannot avail ourſelves. And if once this principle be deeply rooted in our hearts, then it will become eaſy and delightful to us, to communicate good to our fellow-men, in obedience to the command of God, and in imitation of his example. Let us always bear in mind "the "grace of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who, "though he was rich, yet for our ſakes be- "come poor, that we, through his poverty, "might be rich." Let us conſider the uncertainty of all earthly things, and this will diſpoſe us to employ them with greater cheerfulneſs for the relief and comfort of our needy brethren, before they be taken from us, or we by death be divorced from them. Above all, let us beg of God the influences of his Spirit, which alone can vanquiſh that ſelfiſhneſs which is the great oppoſer of charity, and inclines our hearts to all thoſe acts of compaſſion and kindneſs which adorn our Chriſtian profeſſion, and by their beauty and uſefulneſs engage others to glorify our heavenly Father.

SER-

SERMON XIV.

JOHN x. 11.

I am the good ſhepherd: the good ſhepherd giveth his life for the ſheep.

THOUGH Chriſt is in every view precious to them that believe, yet ſome of the characters which he ſuſtains, preſent him to us in a milder light than others, and render him comparatively more lovely and eſtimable. And amidſt the variety of titles given him in Scripture, there is perhaps none more expreſſive of condeſcenſion and grace, than that which he is pleaſed to aſſume in my text.

As many of the Jews were ſhepherds by occupation, the language of this deſcription would be obvious to them all. And they who were enlightened by the Spirit of God, would not only perceive the propriety,

but likewiſe reliſh all the ſweetneſs of this endearing deſignation.

To us, indeed, an alluſion to the paſtoral life can hardly appear with equal beauty and ſtrength. Many circumſtances of reſemblance would ſtrike thoſe who were acquainted with rural affairs, which muſt neceſſarily be ſuppoſed to eſcape our obſervation. But though we cannot trace them all with a critical exactneſs, yet by the light which the Scriptures afford us, I hope I ſhall be able to bring as many proofs of our Lord's care and tenderneſs, as may ſuffice to illuſtrate the propriety of the alluſion, and ſhow with what juſtice this title of the Good Shepherd is claimed by our Redeemer.

I begin with that to which our Lord himſelf appeals in the text. "I," ſays he, "am "the good Shepherd: the good Shepherd "giveth his life for the ſheep."

It was a ſignal proof that David gave of his care and tenderneſs, when he ventured his life for the ſake of his ſheep, and encountered a bear and a lion in their defence.

But though the attempt was hazardous, it was not altogether desperate: he had hope of success, and actually prevailed. Besides, the charge committed to him was his father's property, part of which would one day fall to his own share: so that his personal interest was connected with the preservation of it; for if the flock decreased, his part of the inheritance would have been diminished in proportion.

But our blessed Lord had no inducement of this nature. His interest was in no shape connected with our welfare; his glory and happiness were independent of us. He could neither be enriched by our homage, nor impoverished by the want of it. Besides, we had forfeited all title to his protection, and by the most wicked and unprovoked rebellion had rendered ourselves the objects of his just displeasure. Yet such was his free and unmerited goodness, that he not only hazarded his life in our behalf, but voluntarily resigned it, that we might live through him. "All we like sheep had gone "astray," says the evangelical Prophet, "we "had turned every one to his own way."

But

But "he was wounded for our tranſgreſ-
"ſions, he was bruiſed for our iniquities;"
or, in the language of the New Teſtament,
"He who knew no ſin" became a ſin-offer-
ing for us: the juſt One ſuffered for the un-
"juſt, "that he might bring us to God."

Had our caſe been merely unfortunate, like that of a weak and harmleſs lamb ſeized by a lion, whom it could neither reſiſt nor avoid, pity might have inclined a generous heart to attempt ſomething for our deliverance. But our miſery was the effect, not of weakneſs, but of voluntary wickedneſs. We choſe it in its cauſe. We ſinned, though we were forewarned that death would be the iſſue. We were not caught by ſurpriſe, but deliberately ſurrendered, or rather ſold, ourſelves to the adverſary. Yet in this ſituation, when we had nothing to invite, far leſs to deſerve, his regard and affection, did the bleſſed Jeſus fly to our relief; and deſcending from the throne, put on the form of a ſervant, that in our place he might ſuffer and die on this earth which he had made.

Beſides, the fatal deeds which forfeited

our happineſs were ſins committed directly againſt himſelf. It was his own law we tranſgreſſed, his own royalty we invaded: we fought againſt him with his own arms, and joined in confederacy with his moſt inveterate enemies. So that every obſtacle that can be imagined lay in the road of mercy; the blackeſt ingratitude, the moſt outrageous inſolence; in a word, all the circumſtances were united which could aggravate our guilt, and inflame the wrath of him againſt whom we ſinned; and conſpired to render our puniſhment not only a righteous, but even a wiſe and neceſſary exerciſe of ſeverity, for vindicating the honour of the Sovereign, and for maintaining the credit and influence of his government. Nay, as the threatening was publiſhed before the penalty was incurred, truth as well as juſtice demanded the execution of it.

Such were our circumſtances, when this Friend of ſinners, but the enemy of ſin, came upon the wings of love to ſave us. "Deliver them," ſaid he, "from going "down to the pit," and againſt me let the ſword of juſtice be unſheathed. Here was goodneſs,

goodneſs, generous, diſintereſted goodneſs, that never had, and that never can have, a parallel. "Scarcely for a righteous man "will one die, peradventure for a good man "ſome would even dare to die;" but who hath ever heard of one dying for an enemy? Or if ſuch a prodigy could be found among men, yet the generoſity even of this perſon would fall infinitely ſhort of the example in my text. Such a one might be ſaid to reſign a life; but then it is a precarious, dependent life; a debt payable on demand; a leaſe revokable at pleaſure. A mere creature can give away nothing that is properly his own, becauſe he has nothing but what he received. Whereas our dearеſt Lord not only died in the room of enemies, but by dying reſigned a life that, in the ſtricteſt ſenſe, was his property: for ſo he ſays in the 18th verſe of this chapter, "I have power to lay down my life, and I "have power to take it up again." He had an eſtate of his own (ſo to ſpeak), an original, and therefore an abſolute, right to his life. This, as it gave merit and efficacy to his death, ſo it qualified him to

exhibit that myſtery of love, which angels contemplated with increaſing wonder, when he aſſumed our nature, and became our Shepherd, and in that character gave his life for the ſheep.

But did the bleſſed Jeſus ſtop here? Did he merely reſtore ſinners to a capacity of happineſs, by expiating their guilt, and paving the way for their return to God? Or, to carry forward the alluſion, does the good Shepherd ſatisfy himſelf with reſcuing his ſheep from the jaws of the lion, and then leave them to their own conduct, to find the road back to the fold from whence they had ſtrayed? No—For, in the

2d place, He alſo becomes their guide; and, as it is beautifully expreſſed in the 23d Pſalm, "He leads them in the paths of "righteouſneſs for his name's ſake." How amiable does he appear when introduced by Ezekiel, ſpeaking after this manner: "Be- "hold I, even I, will both ſearch my ſheep, "and ſeek them out: as a ſhepherd ſeeketh "out his flock, ſo will I ſeek out my ſheep, "and will deliver them out of all places "where they have been ſcattered in the "dark

" dark and cloudy day. I will ſeek that " which was loſt, and bring again that " which was driven away: I will bind up " that which was broken, and ſtrengthen " that which was ſick." Of the ſame mild and gracious import is that tender repreſentation in the prophecy of Iſaiah: " He " ſhall feed his flock like a ſhepherd; he " ſhall gather the lambs with his arms, and " carry them in his boſom, and gently lead " them that are with young." In alluſion to theſe prophetical deſcriptions of the Meſſiah, our Lord himſelf hath declared in the New Teſtament, that " the Son of man is " come to ſeek and to ſave that which was " loſt." And having in this chapter aſſumed the title of a Shepherd, he ſays in the 16th verſe, " Other ſheep I have, which are not " of this fold, them alſo I muſt bring, and " they ſhall hear my voice."

And indeed this exerciſe of his paſtoral office is no leſs neceſſary than it is kind; for ſuch is the enmity of our hearts, ſuch the perverſeneſs of our natures, that after all he has done without us, to bring us to God, yet if his Spirit did not work within us,

none of us would ever think of returning to him. "The carnal mind is enmity againſt "God; for it is not ſubject to the law of "God, neither indeed can be." Accordingly Paul reminds the converts at Epheſus, that till Chriſt quickened them, they too were "dead in treſpaſſes and ſins, and children of "wrath even as others." Hear the language of our Lord to his diſciples of every tribe of men, "Ye have not choſen me, but I "have choſen you:" and that aſſertion of the Apoſtle which is univerſally true, "By "grace are ye ſaved through faith, and that "not of yourſelves, it is the gift of God." And does he not merit the deſignation of a good Shepherd, who not only ſaves his flock from deſtruction, and opens to them the door of his ſheep-fold, but goes after them into the wilderneſs, purſues them whilſt they are flying from their own happineſs, and never gives over his ſearch, till he finds them, and then leads them in ſafety to a place of reſt, where every thing is provided that their neceſſities require?—For this is a

3*d* proof of his love to his ſheep; having brought

brought them into his fold, he ſupplies all their wants, and feeds them with food convenient for them. How ſweetly did David ſing under the ſenſe of this privilege, "The "Lord is my ſhepherd, I ſhall not want: "he maketh me to lie down in green pa- "ſtures; he leadeth me beſide the ſtill "waters."—"The young lions may lack "and ſuffer hunger, but they that fear the "Lord ſhall not lack any good thing."— "I will feed them," (ſaid God by the Pro- "phet Ezekiel chap. xxxiv. 14.), "I will "feed them in a good paſture, and upon "the high mountains of Iſrael ſhall their "fold be: there ſhall they lie in a good "fold, and in a fat paſture ſhall they feed "upon the mountains of Iſrael." Here peace and affluence are repreſented in the moſt ſtriking and agreeable colours. And that this promiſe has a ſpiritual meaning, and extends to the goſpel church, appears from verſe 23d, where the Meſſiah, under the well-known title of David, is brought fully into view, as the perſon by whoſe hand theſe bleſſings are diſpenſed. "I will "ſet up one ſhepherd over them, and he "ſhall

" ſhall feed them, even my ſervant David,
" he ſhall feed them, and he ſhall be their
" ſhepherd. And I the Lord will be their
" God, and my ſervant David a prince
" among them: I the Lord have ſpoken it.
" And I will make with them a covenant of
" peace, and will cauſe the evil beaſts to
" ceaſe out of the land: and they ſhall
" dwell ſafely in the wilderneſs, and ſleep
" in the woods. And I will make them,
" and the places round about my hill, a
" bleſſing; and I will cauſe the ſhower to
" come down in his ſeaſon: there ſhall be
" ſhowers of bleſſing.—And I will raiſe up
" for them a plant of renown, and they
" ſhall be no more conſumed with hunger
" in the land." It is not improbable that our Lord had this prophetical deſcription in his eye, when he ſaid in the 9th verſe of this chapter, " I am the door (of the ſheep);
" by me if any man enter in, he ſhall be
" ſaved, and ſhall go in and out, and find
" paſture." But how muſt it amaze us, to hear from his own lips, that he is not only the door by which the ſheep enter into the paſture, but is himſelf the paſture upon which they feed; yet theſe are his words,

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in the 6th chapter of this goſpel, at the 51ſt and following verſes: "I am the bread "of life, the living bread which came down "from heaven: if any man eat of this "bread, he ſhall live for ever: and the "bread that I will give is my fleſh, which "I will give for the life of the world: "Verily, verily I ſay unto you, except ye "eat the fleſh of the Son of man, and drink "his blood, ye have no life in you. Who-"ſo eateth my fleſh, and drinketh my "blood, hath eternal life: for my fleſh is "meat indeed, and my blood is drink in-"deed." Nay, is not this precious food to be diſpenſed to us this day, in the holy ſacrament *, under the ſignificant emblems of bread and wine, when the good Shepherd ſhall ſay, and ſay it with power, to thoſe who believe in him, and know his voice, "Take and eat; this is my body broken "for you: and this cup is the New Teſta-"ment in my blood; drink ye all of it." I ſuppoſe I need not inform you, that theſe expreſſions are figurative. You have long been taught, that the Lord's ſupper is a ſacra-

* Preached on a Communion-ſabbath.

ſacrament, wherein, by giving and receiving bread and wine, according to Chriſt's appointment, his death is ſhewed forth, and the worthy receivers are not after a corporeal and carnal manner, but by faith, made partakers of his body and blood, with all his benefits, to the ſpiritual nouriſhment and growth in grace. This is not the worldling's portion, the whole amount of which is vanity and vexation: no, this is ſubſtantial food, even all the bleſſings of the new and well ordered covenant, the juſtification of our perſons, the renovation of our natures, adoption into the family of God, aſſurance of his love, peace of conſcience, joy in the Holy Ghoſt; in a word, all the unſearchable riches of his grace. Thus doth Chriſt feed his ſheep; he inveſts them with a right to all the bleſſings of his purchaſe, and diſtributes theſe bleſſings as their neceſſities require, till, as Paul hath expreſſed it, (Eph. iii. 19.), "They are filled with all the "fulneſs of God."—But farther, in the

4th place, It belongs to a good ſhepherd to defend his flock, as well as to feed them. And this office he likewiſe performs in the moſt

moſt effectual manner. He watches over them by night and by day; for "he that "keeps Iſrael, neither ſlumbers nor ſleeps." —"Fear not," ſays he, "for I am with "thee; be not diſmayed, for I am thy God: "I will ſtrengthen thee, yea I will help "thee, yea I will uphold thee with the right "hand of my righteouſneſs." Their enemies indeed are many and ſtrong, but he is mighty on whom their help is laid. He makes his grace ſufficient for them, and will keep them by his power through faith unto ſalvation. Hear his own words, in the 27th and following verſes of this chapter, "My ſheep hear my voice, and I know "them, and they follow me. And I give "unto them eternal life, and they ſhall "never periſh, neither ſhall any pluck them "out of my hand. My Father who gave them "me, is greater than all: and none is able "to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I "and my Father are one." He foreſees the trials which are coming upon them; and prays for them effectually, that their faith may not fail. He gives power to the faint, and to them that have no might he in-

increaſes ſtrength. And when at any time they ſtumble and fall, he comes ſeaſonably to their relief, lifts up their hands which hang down, and ſtrengthens their feeble knees; and having enlarged their hearts, enables them to run in the way of his commandments. Thus does he conduct them through the ſlippery paths of life, and continues to be their guardian even until death. Neither does he leave them at the hour of death.—For,

5thly, When they walk through the valley of the ſhadow of death, his rod and his ſtaff comfort and ſuſtain them. He fortifies and cheers their departing ſpirits; and when the evening ſhadows gather thick around them, the Holy Ghoſt, the Comforter, is ſent to ſay to them, that death as well as life is theirs. Nay, "the good "Shepherd himſelf, who gave his life for "the ſheep," will ſay to them in this awful hour, "Fear not, I am he that liveth "and was dead; and behold, I am alive "for evermore, and have the keys of hell "and death:—I am the reſurrection and "the life: he that believeth on me, though

" he were dead, yet ſhall he live." What a multitude of ſaints, who now inherit the promiſes, have in their laſt moments experienced the effect of theſe gracious and joyful aſſurances! In how many inſtances hath a lively and unexpected view of the promiſes of God, and of the great redemption, ſuſtained and even elevated a dying ſaint, who, from the infirmities of the body, or other cauſes, was, through fear of death, ſubject to bondage all his life! The ſenſible preſence of the good Shepherd, in theſe awful moments, will ſupport the moſt fearful, and the feebleſt of the flock. It will enable him that hath no might, to triumph over death, and him that hath the power of death; and, even in the preſence of the king of terrors, it will teach him this ſong of victory, " My fleſh and my heart faileth; " but God is the ſtrength of my heart, and " my portion for ever."—" Thanks be unto " God, which hath given me the victory, " through Jeſus Chriſt my Lord."—" For " I am perſuaded, that neither death nor " life, nor angels, nor principalities nor " powers, nor things preſent, nor things to " come,

" come, nor height, nor depth, nor any " other creature, ſhall be able to ſeparate " me from the love of God, which is in " Chriſt Jeſus my Lord." It is true, the ſaints of God have not all the ſame degree of ſenſible comfort at the hour of death. The wiſdom of heaven may ſometimes permit them to ſhut their eyes, without perceiving the full extent of the bleſſedneſs of them who die in the Lord, or without having received thoſe ſenſible tokens of their victory over death. But, " though " weeping may endure for a night," while they are yet ſtruggling to be releaſed from the mortal tabernacle, their ſpirits ſhall awake to everlaſting joy.—For, in the

6*th* and *laſt* place, When the morning of the day that never ends ſhall dawn, they ſhall again ſee the good Shepherd, ſtretching out his arms to receive them into everlaſting habitations. " They ſhall ſee him as " he is:" they ſhall " be ſatisfied with his " likeneſs." The manſions which he is now preparing for them will then be ready. Each of them ſhall enter into the bleſſed abode provided for him. " They ſhall go

" no more out for ever;" and " the Lamb " which is in the midſt of the throne ſhall " feed them, and ſhall lead them to living " fountains of water: and God ſhall wipe " away all tears from their eyes." Then ſhall they ſing together, with united gratitude and joy, the triumphant and eternal ſong of praiſe, ſaying, " Worthy is the " Lamb that was ſlain, to receive power, " and riches, and wiſdom, and ſtrength, " and honour, and glory, and bleſſing: " for thou haſt redeemed us to God by thy " blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, " and people, and nation. Salvation to our " God, which ſitteth upon the throne, and " unto the Lamb."

And now ſay, my dear brethren, in the review of what you have heard, is not the Lord Jeſus a good Shepherd indeed? He redeemed his flock with his blood, and guides them by his Spirit, and feeds them with all the rich fruits of his purchaſe. He defends them in life, accompanies them through death, and conducts them to thoſe regions of light and love, where they ſhall dwell in his preſence for evermore, eating the fruit of the tree of life, and drinking

the water of the river of life, following the Lamb whitherſoever he goeth.

Thrice happy they who are the ſheep of his paſture; who, allured by his love, and aided by his grace, have returned to him as the "ſhepherd and biſhop of their ſouls."

Let me then call upon ſuch; for of ſuch, I truſt, a goodly number are aſſembled in this place; let me, I ſay, call upon them to reflect, with gratitude and joy, upon the proofs they have already received of his care and tenderneſs. Remember how he found you wandering in the wilderneſs, expoſed to every beaſt of prey, inſenſible of your danger, and unable to avoid it. Remember how he opened your eyes to ſee your miſery, and not only diſcover the all-ſufficient remedy, but powerfully determined and enabled you to apply it. And let theſe paſt experiences endear him to your ſouls, and ſtrengthen your dependence on him, for whatever elſe may be neceſſary to complete your ſalvation.

This is the natural tendency of the repreſentation I have given you, and this is the improvement of it that beſt ſuits the occaſion

occaſion of our preſent meeting. The Good Shepherd is this day to feed his own ſheep, in the fatteſt part of that paſture which his love hath prepared for them. The ordinance now before us, doth not merely exhibit the riches of his grace, but ſeals and applies them to each believer in particular, that, having this ſecurity ſuperadded to the unchangeable promiſe and oath of God, they may "have a ſtrong conſolation, who "have fled for refuge, to lay hold on the "hope ſet before them."

With this view, then, let us approach the table of the Lord, and pray, that this goſpel-feaſt may prove effectual, by his bleſſing, to confirm our faith, to inflame our love, and to enliven our hope; that by the nouriſhment it affords, we may be ſtrengthened to purſue our journey through this wilderneſs, till having paſſed the Jordan of death, and arrived at the heavenly Canaan, faith and hope ſhall become ſight and enjoyment, and love, ever growing with the ages of eternity, ſhall embrace with increaſing vigour and delight, the good Shepherd who gave his life for the ſheep. *Amen.*

SERMON XV.

HEBREWS xiii. 5.

He hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.

THIS comfortable declaration or promise is introduced by the Apostle, to enforce the duty of contentment, to which he had exhorted the Hebrews in the preceding part of the verse. Nothing can be more unbecoming in a child of God, than dissatisfaction with his present condition, or anxiety about his future provision in the world. It is no wonder to see worldly men, whose portion of good things lies wholly upon earth, loading themselves with thick clay, and eagerly grasping every thing which their craving appetites demand. Such persons cannot but be uneasy when they meet with disappointments; because, having

having nothing desirable in prospect beyond the grave, in losing their present enjoyments they lose their *all*. But the Christian, who knows of a treasure in heaven, a treasure incorruptible in its own nature, and which no fraud nor force can take from him, may, and ought to look down with a holy indifference upon every thing here below, resigning himself entirely to the disposal of his heavenly Father, who not only knows what is best for him, but hath likewise obliged himself, by covenant and promise, to make all things work together for the eternal advantage of those who love him and confide in his mercy.

It was this argument which Christ used with his disciples, to dissuade them from an anxious solicitude about their temporal concerns (Matth. vi. 31.), "Take no thought, "saying, What shall we eat? or what shall "we drink? or wherewithal shall we be "clothed? For after all these things do the "Gentiles seek, and your heavenly Father "knoweth that ye have need of all these "things. But seek ye first the kingdom of "God, and his righteousness; and all these

" things ſhall be added unto you." God will ſupport and maintain his own people, as long as he has any ſervice for them in this world. He knows all their wants; and as his goodneſs conſtantly inclines him, ſo his power doth at all times enable him, to beſtow every needful ſupply in its ſeaſon. And can our intereſt be lodged in better hands? Who that believes this, would chooſe to be the diſpoſer of his own lot? " The " Lord reigneth," ſays the Pſalmiſt, " let " the earth rejoice." And ſurely they who can ſay, This God is our God, our Father and our Friend, have cauſe to rejoice in every condition, and muſt act very inconſiſtently with their profeſſion and hopes, if any thing from without can diſturb their inward peace and tranquillity.—I propoſe therefore, in dependence upon divine aid,

Firſt, To ſhew the import of this gracious promiſe, " I will never leave thee nor for- " ſake thee."

Secondly, I ſhall inquire who the perſons are that may apply the comfort of this promiſe to themſelves.

Thirdly, I ſhall lay before you ſome of thoſe

thoſe grounds of aſſurance on which the people of God may depend for the accompliſhment of this promiſe; and then direct you to the practical improvement of the ſubject.

I begin with the import of the promiſe itſelf, "I will never leave thee nor forſake "thee."—And,

1ſt, It is here ſuppoſed, that all other things may forſake us: for in this promiſe God plainly intends to diſtinguiſh himſelf from the creatures, by claiming this perfection of conſtancy or unchangeableneſs, as an attribute peculiar to himſelf. Vanity is engraved in deep and legible characters upon every thing below the ſun. All things on earth are periſhing in their own nature, and ſo fleeting and deceitful, that they who lean upon them, only ſecure to themſelves a more intenſe degree of pain and vexation; for ſooner or later they will ſlide from under them, and leave nothing in their room, but the diſgrace of a fooliſh choice, and the bitterneſs of diſappointed hope. Hiſtory affords us innumerable proofs

of this. The wiſeſt men in every age, have obſerved and lamented the mutability of all earthly things; and we need only keep our eyes and our ears open, to learn this truth, by ſome freſh example, every day we live.

How often do we ſee riches make unto themſelves wings, and flee away as an eagle towards heaven? What a variety of accidents may ſuddenly deprive a man of all his ſubſtance, and reduce him to the loweſt ſtate of poverty and want? A ſtorm at ſea, or a fire at land, will in a few hours conſume the labours of many years: and he who, whilſt I ſpeak, poſſeſſeth plenty of all things, and promiſeth himſelf a long ſucceſſion of proſperous days, may, before to-morrow's ſun, find himſelf ſtripped of all his ſubſtance, and obliged to depend upon the bounty of others for the common neceſſaries of life. How many, who boaſted that their mountain ſtood ſtrong, have ſuddenly been thrown down from the higheſt pinnacle of power and greatneſs? Even princes, when they leaſt dreamt of it, have been forced to exchange their palace for a priſon; and have learnt by ſad experience,

that

that crowns are but tottering emblems of power, and that royalty itſelf hath no exemption from the viciſſitude of ſublunary things. Reputation and friends, health and all bodily advantages, yea reaſon, with all the endowments of the mind, are ſo uncertain and mutable, that no man can promiſe on the poſſeſſion of them. The faireſt character may be ſullied with the breath of calumny; our friends may prove falſe, or abandon us through miſtake; or when they are faithful, and in all reſpects comfortable to us, yet death may ſnatch them from us, one after another, till we are in a manner left ſolitary in the midſt of the earth. Health and ſtrength, and whatever elſe belongs to the body, are of all things the leaſt durable, and the moſt ſubject to change. Life itſelf is but a vapour, which, for any thing we know, may vaniſh into air, the very next breath we draw. We ſee frequently alſo, that the mind, as well as the body, is liable to many ſad diſaſters. In ſome men, the intellectual powers are ſo blunted and impaired, that they ſeem to be almoſt totally extinguiſhed; and, in others,

ſo

ſo ſtrangely diſordered, that, inſtead of being of uſe to them, they ſerve only to render them more completely wretched. In a word, our condition upon earth is liable to continual alteration, and there is nothing we can be ſecure of, ſo much as for one moment. How fooliſh then are they who promiſe themſelves any durable happineſs in this world? Such perſons may truly be ſaid to build their houſe upon the ſand; and though perhaps they may be allowed to raiſe it to ſome height, yet ere long ſome ſudden unforeſeen ſtorm ſhall lay it in ruins, and bury all their vain expectations under it.

But what I would chiefly obſerve upon this head is, that frequently the people of God are exerciſed with the ſevereſt trials, and meet with the ſharpeſt afflictions while they remain upon earth. For this mutability of the creatures is not the effect of *chance*, but of *deſign*. God thereby deſigns to render all thoſe inexcuſable, who chooſe them for their portion: and when his own children are in danger of being enſnared by them, he pulls them, as it were, with violence

violence, out of their hands, that they may beware of contracting too close an alliance with them in future. He will not suffer them to continue long in so dangerous an error; and he sends the rod to undeceive them: he frequently repeats the stroke, to remind them that they are only sojourners in a strange land, and to quicken their desires for their Father's house above; for their Father's house, where alone they shall have fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore.

2*dly*, As the inconstancy of the creatures is here supposed, so this promise necessarily implies, that the presence of God with his people, is a sufficient ground of consolation in every state and condition of life. David was sensible of this, when he said, in the 23d Psalm, "Though I walk through the "valley of the shadow of death, I will fear "no evil, for thou art with me:" and upon the same principle, the Prophet Habakkuk triumphs in name of the church, "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, "neither shall there be fruit in the vines, "the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields

" fields ſhall yeild no meat, the flock ſhall " be cut off from the fold, and there ſhall " be no herd in the ſtalls; yet will I re- " rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God " of my ſalvation."

We read in the book of Daniel, that after Nebuchadnezzar the king had cauſed Shadrach, Meſhech and Abednego to be caſt into the burning fiery furnace, he was aſtoniſhed, and roſe up in haſte, and ſaid unto his counſellors, " Did not we caſt " three men bound into the midſt of the " fire? And lo, I ſee four men looſe, walk- " ing in the midſt of the fire, and they " have no hurt: and the form of the fourth " is like the Son of God." Is there a man who reads this paſſage, that does not prefer the condition of theſe captives, to all the ſplendours of the Babyloniſh throne? How little does the trembling monarch ſeem, though ſurrounded with his counſelors? How glorious do the three young Jews appear, whilſt walking amidſt flames with their God and Saviour? How would they rejoice in this exalted privilege? And yet, my brethren, all the ſaints who have God really

really preſent with them, although they cannot ſee him with their bodily eyes, have equal cauſe to rejoice in the midſt of tribulation. For if God be with them, then He is with them who is infinitely wiſe, who is perfectly acquainted with all their wants, and can never be at a loſs to know what is good for them. He is with them who is infinitely powerful, and can eaſily perform whatever his unerring wiſdom ſhall ſuggeſt. He is with them who is perfectly good, yea goodneſs itſelf; who is always diſpoſed to employ his wiſdom in contriving, and his power in executing whatever is neceſſary for their intereſt and happineſs. Yea, he is with them who hath already beſtowed on them the greateſt of all bleſſings, even Jeſus Chriſt his unſpeakable gift: and, as the Apoſtle reaſons, "if God ſpared not "his own Son, but delivered him up for "us all, how ſhall he not with him alſo "freely give us all things?" And is not the preſence of ſuch a God ſufficient for the comfort of his people at all times? Who would mourn the loſs of a taper, who enjoys the light of the ſun? All the creatures

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are nothing without God: whereas he is all in all; " in his favour is life, and his loving " kindneſs is better than life." Even Balaam was conſtrained to confeſs this truth in the preſence of Balak, (Numb. xxiii. 23.) " Surely," ſays he, " there is no enchant- " ment againſt Jacob, nor any divination " againſt Iſrael: for the Lord his God is " with him, and the ſhout of a king is " among them." If the happineſs of Solomon's courtiers excited the admiration of the queen of Sheba, becauſe they had acceſs to the preſence of ſo wiſe and magnificent a king, how inconceivably more happy are they, who are the friends, nay, the children of the King of kings, who have the infinitely perfect and all-ſufficient Jehovah continually near to them?—Which leads me to obſerve, in the

3*d* place, That the conſtant preſence of God with his people is the bleſſing expreſsly contained in this promiſe, " I will never " leave thee nor forſake thee." All other things may forſake you. Riches may take wings and fly away; friends may deſert you, or they may die; your reputation may be

be blaſted; your health and ſtrength may fail and decay; yea, memory, judgement, and all the faculties of your mind, may be weakened or deſtroyed: "but I will never "leave you, I will never forſake you;" my friendſhip is unchangeable, "and whom I "love, I love to the end." All this, ſaith the Apoſtle, God hath ſaid; but he doth not tell us when or where he hath ſaid it, becauſe he hath ſaid it ſo often, and upon ſuch various occaſions, that it is to be met with almoſt every where in ſcripture, and in a manner ſounds through the whole revelation of his will. And indeed I cannot illuſtrate this head better, than by reciting ſome of thoſe paſſages where this general and comprehenſive promiſe is particularly applied, for the comfort of God's people, under the various trials and afflictions to which they are expoſed in this world. All who are acquainted with their Bibles, will remember to have read ſuch paſſages as theſe: "When thou paſſeſt through the "waters, I will be with thee; and through "the rivers, they ſhall not overflow thee: "when thou walkeſt through the fire, thou

" ſhalt not be burnt, neither ſhall the
" flame kindle upon thee; for I am the
" Lord thy God."——" When the poor
" and needy ſeek water, and there is none,
" and their tongue faileth for thirſt, I the
" Lord will hear them, I the God of Iſrael
" will not forſake them. I will open rivers
" in high places, and fountains in the midſt
" of the vallies: I will make the wilderneſs
" a pool of water, and the dry land ſprings
" of water."—" The Lord will be a refuge
" for the oppreſſed, a refuge in time of
" trouble."—" The Lord will not ſuffer
" the ſoul of the righteous to famiſh."—
" He ſhall dwell on high, his defence ſhall
" be the munition of rocks. Bread ſhall
" be given him, his water ſhall be ſure."—
" the Lord will ſtrengthen him upon the
" bed of languiſhing. Thou wilt make all
" his bed in his ſickneſs."—" A father of
" the fatherleſs, a judge of the widows is
" God in his holy habitation."—" Fear
" not," ſaith he, " for I am with thee; be
" not diſmayed, for I am thy God. I will
" ſtrengthen thee, yea, I will help thee,
" yea, I will uphold thee with the right
" hand of my righteouſneſs."

I might quote many other texts, where God promiſeth to be with his people in every caſe of diſtreſs that can be ſuppoſed; but I ſhall have ſaid enough to give you ſome notion of the vaſt extent of this comfortable promiſe, when I have added, that it reacheth beyond the grave, and comprehends no leſs than eternity itſelf. As God will not leave his people in life, as he will not forſake them at death; ſo he will at laſt receive them into glory, and make them to dwell for ever in his immediate preſence. But who are his people? Who are the happy perſons that may apply the comfort of this promiſe to themſelves? This is the

Second thing I propoſed to inquire into.

And, in general, this promiſe is addreſſed to believers in Chriſt Jeſus, and to them only, excluſive of all others: for this is the order which God hath eſtabliſhed. He firſt gives us his Son; and when this "unſpeakable gift" is thankfully received, then, together "with him, he freely gives "us all other things." Men may fancy

themſelves in good terms with God upon account of ſome moral qualifications of which they are poſſeſſed; and I greatly ſuſpect, that many among us are ruined by this miſtake: but I am not afraid to affirm, that no moral qualifications whatever can reconcile a ſinner to God, or intitle him to plead any one promiſe from the beginning of the Bible to the end of it. The reaſon is plain: All the bleſſings promiſed in the goſpel were purchaſed by Chriſt with the price of his own blood. To him they belong of right; for in regard of "his humbling himſelf, and becoming obedient "unto death, even the death of the croſs, "God hath highly exalted him," and "hath put all things under his feet, and "hath given him to be head over all things "to the church." Accordingly, Chriſt himſelf ſays (Matth. xi. 27.), "All things are "delivered unto me of my Father:" and (Matth. xxviii. 18.) "All power is given "unto me in heaven and in earth." Every good and perfect gift, therefore, muſt be conveyed to us through his hands; and it is not only a vain, but I may even call it

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an impious attempt, to addreſs God immediately for thoſe bleſſings which he hath already given to his Son, and committed to his diſpoſal as King of Zion, for the behoof of his true and ſpiritual ſubjects. All the promiſes in Scripture muſt neceſſarily be explained in a conſiſtency with this great fundamental truth: and when the perſons to whom they are addreſſed are deſcribed by any moral qualification, ſuch as righteouſneſs, mercifulneſs, and the like, it muſt always be underſtood, that they are previouſly in a ſtate of friendſhip with God; and that theſe qualifications are mentioned, not as the terms of their acceptance with him, but only as the fruits and evidences of that faith which unites them to Chriſt, in whom all the promiſes are "Yea and Amen."

Would any then know, whether they may apply to themſelves the gracious and comfortable promiſe in my text, they muſt firſt of all try their relation to Chriſt. If they are ſtill unacquainted with this great and only Mediator between God and man; if they have never fled to him as their city of refuge, nor accepted of him as the "Lord

" their righteouſneſs and their ſtrength;" it is certain that they have no part nor lot in this matter. For nothing can be more expreſs than thoſe words of John the Baptiſt (John iii. 36.), " He that believeth on " the Son, hath everlaſting life; but he that " believeth not the Son, ſhall not ſee life, " but the wrath of God abideth on him." Whereas, on the other hand, if, from a deep conviction of your guilt and miſery, you have cordially accepted the Lord Jeſus Chriſt for all the purpoſes of a Saviour; if you can ſay without any known guile, that, renouncing all other grounds of confidence, you depend on him alone for pardon and peace, for grace and glory, and every good thing; if you have the evidence of your faith in Chriſt, and of your union to him, which ariſes from the ſanctifying power of the Holy Ghoſt on your tempers and your lives, determining you to deny ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, and to live ſoberly and righteouſly and godly in the world; then are you the friends of God, and may lawfully conſider yourſelves as the perſons to whom he hath ſaid, " I will never leave " thee

" thee nor forſake thee." And, for your farther encouragement, I ſhall now go on to the

Third general head, and briefly ſuggeſt to you ſome of thoſe grounds of aſſurance upon which you may confidently rely for the accompliſhment of this promiſe. Conſider, then,

1*ſt*, Who he is that hath ſaid this. " He " is not man, that he ſhould lie, nor the ſon " of man, that he ſhould repent." Theſe are the words of God himſelf, who is incapable of deceit, and with whom " there is " no variableneſs, neither ſhadow of turn- " ing.—" He is the rock, his work is per- " fect, for all his ways are judgment, a " God of truth, and without iniquity, juſt " and true is he."—" The mountains ſhall " depart, and the hills be removed; but " my kindneſs ſhall not depart from thee, " neither ſhall the covenant of my peace be " removed, ſaith the Lord that hath mercy " upon thee." And is not the word, the promiſe of ſuch a God, a ſufficient ground of truſt? Yea, he hath not only ſaid it, bu

he hath alſo ſworn it. "For God being "willing more abundantly to ſhow to the "heirs of promiſe the immutability of his "counſel, hath confirmed it by an oath, "that by two immutable things, in which "it was impoſſible for God to lie, they "might have a ſtrong conſolation, who "have fled for refuge to lay hold on the "hope ſet before them." And can our ſouls deſire a better ſecurity? What can eſtabliſh our faith, if this doth not eſtabliſh it?

2dly, Believers in Chriſt Jeſus are the children of God, adopted into his family, and beautified with his image: and this is another pledge of his gracious promiſe; for ſurely he will never abandon his own offspring. "Can a mother forget her ſuck-"ing child," ſaith God, "that ſhe ſhould "not have compaſſion on the ſon of her "womb? Yea, ſhe may forget, yet will not "I forget thee." The affection and tenderneſs of an earthly parent are but faint reſemblances of God's paternal love. In him, love is an infinite overflowing fountain of beneficence. And then his love is as permanent

manent as it is extenſive. He is always in one mind, and therefore can never leave nor forſake his people.

3*dly*, The conſtant interceſſion of our glorious High Prieſt effectually ſecures the accompliſhment of this promiſe. By his death, he obtained the Holy Spirit to dwell in his people, and to abide with them. This he intimated to his diſciples for their comfort and encouragement, when they were about to loſe his bodily preſence, (John xvi. 7.) "It is expedient for you that "I go away; for if I go not away, the Com-"forter will not come unto you; but if I "depart, I will ſend him unto you." And, in another place, "I will pray the Father, "and he ſhall give you another Comforter, "even the Spirit of truth, who ſhall abide "with you;"—who ſhall abide with you, and that not for a ſeaſon only, but "for "ever."

With what tenderneſs did he recommend them to his heavenly Father, in his laſt interceſſory prayer upon earth (John xvii. 11.), "And now I am no more in the "world, but theſe are in the world. Ho-

" ly Father, keep through thine own name " thoſe whom though haſt given me." Is it poſſible, then, that God ſhould forſake thoſe for whom his well-beloved Son pleads with ſuch earneſtneſs and affection? Eſpecially if it be conſidered, in the

4*th* and *laſt* place, That his own glory is intereſted in the accompliſhment of this gracious promiſe. I mean that glory which conſiſts in making effectual the purpoſes of his grace towards thoſe whom he hath choſen out of the world. For were he to leave or forſake his people, they muſt fall a prey to their ſpiritual enemies, and yield to the adverſary of God and man that triumph which he hath ſought from the beginning. That apoſtate ſpirit never deſerts his purpoſe of enſnaring and deſtroying the ſouls of men. He is ever on the watch to ſeize them in a defenceleſs moment; ſo that, were God to leave them without his protection, they would fall eaſy victims to his artifices. And will he ſuffer his purpoſes thus to be baffled by his declared foe? It cannot be; and therefore he never will leave nor forſake his people.

I ſhall now conclude this diſcourſe with a ſhort practical improvement, addreſſed to two different claſſes of people. And the

1ſt Sort of perſons to whom I will addreſs myſelf, are thoſe who are yet in a ſtate of alienation from God. It is poſſible, that at preſent you may not ſee the value of this promiſe which I have been unfolding. You have never perhaps been ſenſible of the vanity of earthly enjoyments; or, if you have been weary of ſome of them, you promiſe yourſelves a more permanent ſatisfaction in others. Alas! this is a deluſive expectation; for happineſs never can be extracted from the creatures. God hath pronounced an irreverſible decree of vanity upon them all. Ye are therefore purſuing what will for ever flee from you:—ye are feeding upon mere huſks, which can neither nouriſh nor ſatisfy you. But though you ſhould even be contented with this poor and empty portion, yet you cannot always enjoy it: for what will ye do when every earthly prop is tottering and ready to ſink under you?—

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What will ye do at that period, when neither riches, nor power, nor friends, nor any thing that this world affords, will be able to give you the leaſt relief? Let me therefore intreat you ſpeedily to ſeek the favour of that God who is the only adequate portion of an immortal ſoul. Liſten to that kind expoſtulation and advice (Iſ. lv. 2, 3.) "Wherefore do ye ſpend money "for that which is not bread? and your "labour for that which ſatisfieth not? "Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye "that which is good, and let your ſoul "delight itſelf in fatneſs. Incline your "ear, and come unto me, hear, and your "ſoul ſhall live: and I will make an ever-"laſting covenant with you, even the ſure "mercies of David." But I now addreſs myſelf, in the

2d. place, To thoſe happy perſons who are in a ſtate of friendſhip with God. To you, then, I ſay, that this gracious promiſe ſhould both excite and encourage you to ſtedfaſtneſs in the ways of religion. "For if God be with you, who can be "againſt you?"—"Be ſtrong then in the "Lord,

"Lord, and in the power of his might." All neceſſary aid is provided for you in the tenor of the well-ordered covenant, and will not fail to be imparted to you in the time of your need. Your help is laid on One who is mighty to ſave, and who is no leſs willing than able to ſupport you under all your trials. "Wherefore, gird up "the loins of your mind, be ſober, and "hope to the end." But the principal improvement which you ought to make of this promiſe, is to put away from your minds all diſſatisfaction with your preſent condition, or anxiety about your future proviſion in the world. God hath charged himſelf with the care of providing for you while you are here. He hath not indeed promiſed you an exemption from poverty, hardſhips, or afflictions. But he hath aſſured you, that theſe things are no tokens of his diſpleaſure; nay, on the contrary, that they are intended for your greateſt good, and that he is never nearer to his people than when they are in the furnace of affliction. What abundant reaſon then have you to be contented with whatever

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lot he is pleaſed to appoint you in the world, and to look beyond all the momentary diſtreſſes you now ſuffer, to that incorruptible inheritance which is reſerved for you in heaven! "Let your converſation then "be without covetouſneſs; and be content "with ſuch things as ye have: for he hath "ſaid, I will never leave thee nor forſake "thee."

SER-

SERMON XVI.

GALATIANS v. 24.

And they that are Chriſt's have crucified the fleſh, with the affections and luſts.

NO man who hath experienced the deceitfulneſs of his own heart, will think the ſubject of this text improper for the preſent occaſion *. It is true, this day is ſet apart for thankſgiving; and with the higheſt pleaſure would I enter on the delightful theme of divine love and condeſcenſion, which ſhall employ the praiſes of the redeemed through endleſs ages. But a ſolicitous concern, that your joy may be well founded, hath induced me to propoſe to you a ſtrict examination of yourſelves, whether

* Preached on a day of thankſgiving, after the diſpenſation of the Lord's Supper.

whether you have indeed an intereſt in Him, through whom all favour and good will to ſinners is conveyed. The text furniſheth us with an infallible rule to direct our judgment in this inquiry. "They that "are Chriſt's," not all who are called by his name, but they who are united to him, as the branches are united to the vine, who are governed by his Spirit, and have a right to the benefits of his purchaſe, are diſtinguiſhed by *this* attainment, "They "have crucified the fleſh, with the affections "and luſts."

In diſcourſing on theſe words, I propoſe,

Firſt, To ſhow what is meant by crucifying the fleſh, with the affections and luſts.

Secondly, To ſhow, that it is the diſtinguiſhing character, and the real attainment of all who are Chriſt's, to crucify the fleſh, with the affections and luſts. And then to conclude with an improvement ſuited to the occaſion of our preſent meeting.

I begin with inquiring what is meant by

" crucifying the flesh, with the affections " and lusts." By " the flesh," we are to understand the corrupt nature of man; and by " the affections and lusts," those depraved appetites, which maintain their power within us, until the renewing grace of God implant in us those seeds of holiness, by which the image of God is formed on our soul. When man came first from the hands of his Maker, his reason, pure and uncorrupted, was the governing principle of his mind. But by transgressing the original commandment, and eating the forbidden fruit, in compliance with a mean corporeal appetite, the sensitive part of his nature obtained that dominion or predominancy, which it still maintains in every unrenewed man. Accordingly, we find our natural condition opposed, in Scripture, to our regenerated state, under these metaphorical expressions of *flesh* and *spirit*. " That which is born " of the flesh, is flesh; and that which is " born of the Spirit, is spirit." The meaning is plainly this: The temper and dispositions which we bring with us into the world, by ordinary generation, are, since the

the fall, carnal and depraved; whereas the temper and diſpoſitions which we receive by the regeneration of the Holy Ghoſt, are, like their original, ſpiritual and holy. The ſame idea is expreſſed in the 17th verſe of this chapter; where it is ſaid, "The fleſh "luſteth againſt the ſpirit, and the ſpirit "againſt the fleſh; and theſe two are con-"trary the one to the other." It appears then, that by the "fleſh, with the affections "and luſts," we are to underſtand the corrupt ſtate of man's mind ſince the firſt tranſgreſſion, and all thoſe depraved diſpoſitions and affections which naturally flow from the corrupt principle, and which incline us to ſeek happineſs from earthly things, independent of God. We learn, too, what is meant by "crucifying the luſts and "affections of the fleſh;" namely, that this natural depravity of mind is ſubdued; that the carnal principle, like a crucified malefactor, languiſhes and decays; until, by degrees, gracious or renewed habits are formed in us, which at laſt obtain the full poſſeſſion of our minds.

What hath been ſaid, may ſuffice to give

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a plain and intelligible explanation of the terms in the text; and to purſue the metaphor farther, would neither be profitable to you, nor agreeable to myſelf. The words thus explained, give us a very diſtinguiſhing character of a true Chriſtian. He is one who, by the grace of God, hath obtained the victory over his corrupt appetites and inclinations He is in a great meaſure reſcued from the ruins of the fall, and is no longer a ſervant of ſin, that he ſhould obey it in the luſts thereof. "He hath put off, "concerning the former converſation, the "old man, which is corrupt according to "the deceitful luſts; and being renewed in "the ſpirit of his mind, hath put on the "new man, which after God is created in "righteouſneſs and true holineſs."—"The "law of the Spirit of life, which is in "Chriſt Jeſus, hath made him free from "the law of ſin and death." Conſcience, long dethroned by imperious paſſions, hath reaſſumed its authority; and all the faculties of his mind purified and exalted, unite in the purſuit of ſpiritual enjoyments.

And now, my brethren, let me entreat

you to ſtop your ears for a little againſt the ſuggeſtions of ſelf-love, and let conſcience bear teſtimony, whether you have indeed a claim to this character. Alas! if you have no claim to it, this can be no day of thankſgiving to you. If you have adventured to approach the table of the Lord with all your unmortified luſts about you, ye have been guilty of the body and blood of Chriſt; ye have ſealed the ſentence of your own condemnation; and lamentation becomes you better than the voice of praiſe. You may perhaps complain of this as a ſevere and heavy meſſage: but dare any of you ſay that it is a meſſage without a warrant? Shall I ſpeak peace to thoſe to whom God hath not ſpoken peace? Shall I ſoothe you with falſe comforts, which might lead you down to the grave with a lie in your right hand? No: I remember too well the wo pronounced againſt the prophet "who deal-" eth falſely, and healeth the wound of the " daughter of God's people ſlightly." I ſhould not wiſh to be an eternal ſubject of imprecation to hopeleſs ſouls, which I ſhould well

well deſerve to be, if I ſpoke any other language to you than what I now ſpeak.

But you have as yet no cauſe to complain: I have indeed ſet before you the danger, but I have not ſaid you muſt deſpair. On the contrary, my only object is to prevent your everlaſting deſpair, by awakening your fears ere it be too late, and the door of mercy be ſhut againſt you. That door is ſtill open, and the call is yet, "To-day hear his voice." O then harden not your hearts againſt conviction. Decline not an impartial ſcrutiny into your real ſtate. Let this paſſage of Scripture inform you, whether you indeed belong to Chriſt. If you do poſſeſs the marks of thoſe who are his, take the comfort of your ſincerity, and give God the glory. But if the iſſue of the inquiry ſhould turn out otherwiſe, O beware of reſting in this dreadful condition. Give no ſleep to your eyes, nor ſlumber to your eye-lids, till you have ſecured an intereſt in that blood of ſprinkling which cleanſeth from all ſin.

Need I enter on a detail of thoſe luſts and affections which flow from a corrupt

and depraved principle within? "The "works of the flesh," saith the Apostle, at the 19th verse of this chapter, "are ma- "nifest; which are these, Adultery, forni- "cation, uncleanness, lasciviousness, ido- "latry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emu- "lations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, "envyings, murders, drunkenness, revel- "lings, and such like; of the which I tell "you before, as I have also told you in time "past, that they which do such things, shall "not inherit the kingdom of God."

I am sensible, that after the recital of so black a catalogue of crimes, the most of you will already have acquitted yourselves of such enormous degrees of guilt. And I am afraid, that this general acquittal from the charge of heinous transgressions, lulls the consciences of many into a fatal security. I will not go so far as to say, that it were better for the unconverted sinner, that his conscience could charge him with some of these glaring iniquities, although our Saviour's saying seems to imply as much, *viz.* That the publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of heaven before the scribes and pharisees.

phariſees. All that I aſſert is, that you ought not too haſtily to conclude, that the fleſh is crucified, with its affections and luſts, merely becauſe your lives have not been ſpotted with any of thoſe groſs and ſcandalous ſins. In theſe days of light and knowledge, Satan doth not find it for his intereſt to puſh men to the extremities of vice. He rather endeavours to keep the garriſon in peace, by blunting the edge of conviction with the fair ſhows of outward decency and formality.

Be perſuaded, then, to go deeper in your inquiry. Search the very inmoſt corners of your hearts. Put the authority of God in one ſcale, and the intereſts of the fleſh in another, and ſee which of the two weighs heavier in your affections. You frequent the church, you attend on ordinances, and perform the external parts of religion with an apparent reliſh and alacrity. All this is good; but beware of building too much on it. Conſider that theſe obſervances do not in any great degree thwart the intereſts of the fleſh. The laws and cuſtoms of the land favour you; your eſtates

are not thereby impaired, nor your lives endangered; nor is your reputation hurt, but rather advanced. But ſuppoſe the caſe to be otherwiſe, and let your hearts give the anſwer,—Would you perſiſt in the ſame courſe at all riſks, though your eſtates were expoſed to confiſcation, though your names were to be branded with every term of reproach that malice could deviſe; yea, though all the engines of torture lay in the road of duty? Would no proſpect of gain, however ſecure from human diſcovery, tempt you to encroach on the divine rules of juſtice and equity? Can you bleſs them that curſe you, and render good for evil, and forgive the moſt galling injuries, even when Providence puts your enemies in your power? Did the objects of criminal deſire not only tempt but ſolicit you, were you favoured with every circumſtance of time and place, could you check the career of paſſion, with Joſeph's reflection, "How can I do this "great wickedneſs, and ſin againſt God?" Theſe indeed are ſure ſigns that the fleſh is crucified, with its affections and luſts. But if, on the contrary, the fear of man's cenſure

ſure or puniſhment would turn you aſide from the practice of your duty, if the proſpect of ſecret gain could tempt you to lie or cheat, or diſſemble; if any injury appears too great to be forgiven, or any ſenſual appetite too importunate to be denied; in a word, if any temptation, be its circumſtances what they will, would prevail on you to indulge yourſelves in the deliberate omiſſion of any known duty, or in the practice of any known ſin; then, whatever your pretences are, the fleſh, with its affections and luſts, is not yet crucified in you. But do not miſtake me, as if I meant to aſſert, that none have crucified the fleſh but thoſe who are perfect in holineſs. No; the righteous man falleth ſeven times a-day, and riſeth again. Nay, there is not a juſt man upon earth, that doth good, and ſinneth not. And therefore I ſpeak not of thoſe falſe ſteps to which the beſt are liable through the remainders of corruption; but of known and habitual ſins, committed with the full bent and inclination of the will. Theſe plainly betray the predominancy of the fleſh, with its affections and luſts; and ſhow, that the perſon who is

under the dominion of them, has no juſt or ſcriptural claim to an intereſt in Chriſt. For a worldly Chriſtian, or a carnal Chriſtian, or a diſhoneſt Chriſtian, are as groſs contradictions in terms, as an infidel Chriſtian. And this naturally leads me to the

Second thing propoſed; which was to ſhow, that it is the diſtinguiſhing character and the real attainment of all who are Chriſt's, to crucify the fleſh, with the affections and luſts. This is ſo much the uniform language of the New Teſtament, that one ſhould hardly think it required a proof. The great leſſon which our Lord taught his diſciples, was expreſſed in theſe words: "If any man will come after me, "let him deny himſelf, and take up his "croſs, and follow me." This he repeated on various occaſions, as a ſubject that ought to employ their conſtant attention. "He "that taketh not up his croſs, and followeth "after me, is not worthy of me."—"If any "man come after me, and hate not his "father and mother, and wife and children, "and brethren and ſiſters," thoſe neareſt and dearеſt

deareſt relations according to the fleſh, "yea, "and his own life alſo," when the preſervation of it becomes inconſiſtent with the duty he owes to God, "he cannot be my diſciple." And again, "Whoſoever he be of you that "forſaketh not all that he hath," namely, habitually in affection, and actually too, when God calls him to it, "he cannot be "my diſciple."—Theſe are the permanent, the invariable laws of Chriſt's ſpiritual kingdom, and are equally binding on us, as on thoſe to whom they were originally addreſſed. For had our Lord ever intended to relax or mitigate them in any degree, he would certainly have done it in favour of his firſt diſciples, when his church was yet in its infant ſtate, and therefore ſtood in need of greater indulgence. But theſe ſeemingly hard ſayings expreſs the true ſpirit of Chriſtianity, and afford the moſt convincing proof of its divine original. Man fell by ſeeking himſelf, and muſt therefore be raiſed in the way of ſelf-denial. He forfeited his innocence and happineſs by hearkening to the ſolicitation of a fleſhly appetite; and, before he can regain happi-

neſs,

neſs, the fleſh muſt be crucified, with the affections and luſts.

Accordingly we find, that our Saviour's meaning was well underſtood by his immediate followers; and their practice is the beſt commentary on his injunctions. What he recommended, they laboured to attain. Thus Paul writes to the Corinthians, "I "keep under my body, and bring it into "ſubjection, leſt when I have preached to "others, I myſelf ſhould be a caſt-away." The remainders of corruption within him, made him cry out with all the emphaſis of diſtreſs, "O wretched man that I am, who "ſhall deliver me from the body of this "death?" Nay, ſo ſenſible was he of the importance and neceſſity of this deliverance, that, as he expreſſeth it himſelf, "He "counted all thing but loſs and dung;" firſt, "that he might win Chriſt, and be "found in him, not having his own righ-"teouſneſs, but that which is through the "faith of Chriſt, the righteouſneſs which is "of God by faith." And next, "That "he might know Chriſt" experimentally, "and the power of his reſurrection, and

"the

" the fellowſhip of his ſufferings, being made " conformable unto his death." Nor was this only his *wiſh*; we find alſo that it was his real attainment. " I am crucified," ſays he, " with Chriſt: nevertheleſs, I live; yet " not I, but Chriſt liveth in me: and the " life which I now live in the fleſh, I live " by the faith of the Son of God, who " loved me, and gave himſelf for me." And " God forbid that I ſhould glory, ſave " in the croſs of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, by " whom the world is crucified unto me, and " I unto the world." Neither was Paul ſingular in this. It appears to have been the common attainment of all true Chriſtians in his time. For it is ſpoken of in my text as the badge of Chriſtianity, the very thing which diſtinguiſhed Chriſtians from all other men. " They that are " Chriſt's have crucified the fleſh, with the " affections and luſts." I have given a recital of theſe paſſages of Scripture, as they ſerve to explain one another: and I hope that when they are compared together, and duly conſidered, they will appear to be a ſufficient demonſtration, that none whoſe

fleſh

fleſh is not crucified, with its affections and luſts, can, with a Scriptural warrant, lay claim to an intereſt in Chriſt.

Thus I have endeavoured to explain what is meant by "crucifying the fleſh, with "the affections and luſts;" and have ſhown you, that this is the actual attainment of every true Chriſtian. Allow me now to conclude this diſcourſe with a practical improvement of the ſubject.—From what hath been ſaid, then, we learn, in the

1ſt place, What is the true nature of our holy religion. It is not a mere bodily exerciſe, conſiſting only in external ceremonies or obſervances. Earthly rulers can aſk no more but an outward homage: but the Searcher of hearts challengeth the ſincere adoration of the inner man: he who is a Spirit, muſt be worſhipped in ſpirit and in truth. So that to attend the church, to partake of religious ordinances, and to perform the external duties of religion, will be of no avail in the ſight of God, unleſs theſe outward ſervices proceed from a heart warmed with his love, in which every uſurping luſt, that would ſhare his place,

is

is vanquiſhed and dethroned. To be a real Chriſtian, therefore, is not ſo eaſy an attainment as many ſeem to imagine. Fleſh and blood muſt be wreſtled with and overcome; "for fleſh and blood cannot inherit "the kingdom of heaven." Every gratification that is contrary to the holineſs of the divine nature, although dear to us as a right hand or a right eye, muſt be denied. Nay, the very inclination to vicious indulgences muſt be ſubdued, otherwiſe our abſtaining from the outward acts of them will be of no avail. It is the heart that God requires; and if we deny him this, we can give him nothing that is worthy of his acceptance.

An inoffenſive outward deportment may ſoothe your conſciences, and prevent the uneaſy feelings of remorſe, but will not ſave you from final ruin. The very intereſts of the fleſh may make a man forbear diſgraceful ſins, and may, for a time, chain up, without weakening the vigour of corruption. You may be poſſeſſed of many amiable qualities, by which you deſerve well of ſociety, and yet be total ſtrangers to that character of real Chriſtians which is given

given in this text. If temporary good impreſſions, or reſtraints of the fleſh for a ſeaſon, would amount to that character, then Felix, who trembled under conviction, and Herod, who did many things in conſequence of the Baptiſt's preaching, had been real Chriſtians. If the eſtimable qualities of ſocial life were a proof that Chriſtianity had its full effect on the mind, then the young ruler, who had kept the ſecond table of the law from his youth upwards, would have had an unreſerved approbation from our Lord. But Felix and Herod relapſed under the dominion of their luſts; and through the love of this world, the young ruler fell ſhort of the kingdom of heaven.—In the

2d place, From what hath been ſaid, let each of us be prevailed on to try how matters ſtand with himſelf. You ſee that it is not a point to be lightly taken for granted, that a man hath a real intereſt in Chriſt. I have already mentioned ſeveral things under my firſt head of diſcourſe, which may ſerve as hints to direct you in this trial. All that I have further to beg of

you is, that you would judge yourſelves impartially, as thoſe who expect a judgment to come. Try every ground of hope upon which you have hitherto reſted; let every rotten pillar be removed, or elſe the whole building, however glorious in appearance, will ſhortly fall to the ground. Self-love may, for a ſeaſon, blind your eyes: but remember, that it will throw no veil over that impartial judgment which will overtake you at the bar of God. Compare then your actions and diſpoſitions with that holy and ſpiritual law which flatters no man; and then, if conſcience gives an unbiaſſed judgment, I have little doubt that numbers in this aſſembly will diſcover, that "the "fleſh, with its affections and luſts," is not only alive, but in full vigour. Nay, the very beſt will find cauſe to conclude, that the corrupt principle is not yet crucified as it ought to be.

As for thoſe of the firſt claſs now mentioned, if the text itſelf does not furniſh them with a ſufficient motive for crucifying the fleſh, I deſpair of being able to offer any other which will be more powerful.

ful. I might tell you, how mean it is to let ſenſe give law to reaſon, and to prefer the earthly tabernacle to its immortal inhabitant. I might aſſure you, that you are ſerving an ungrateful maſter, whom you can never ſatisfy; that while you feed one luſt, you muſt ſtarve another, whoſe importunate cravings will deſtroy the reliſh of your imagined happineſs. I might tell you, that the fleſh muſt ere long be reduced to rottenneſs and duſt, and be buried under ground, that it may be no offence to the living. But what are all theſe arguments, compared with that motive which is implied in the text, that unleſs you crucify the fleſh, you do not belong to Chriſt; and if you have no intereſt in Chriſt, God is a conſuming fire. So that this furniſheth me with an addreſs, to the ſame purpoſe with what a brave officer made to his ſoldiers in a day of battle: "Unleſs ye kill your enemies," ſaid he, "they will kill you." In like manner, I ſay to you, Unleſs ye crucify the fleſh, it will be your everlaſting ruin. "For "if ye live after the fleſh, ye ſhall die."

As for you who are mourning over the

remainders of corruption, and ſtruggling to get free from them, I know that you will require no motives to engage you to go on in this oppoſition to the carnal principle. I ſhall therefore only offer you a few directions, with which I will now conclude.

Keep a ſtrict watch over your ſenſes. Let nothing enter into the ſoul by theſe avenues without a ſtrict examination. Avoid with the utmoſt caution all thoſe things which may inflame your paſſions, and accuſtom yourſelves to contradict them in their firſt tendencies to evil. A ſpark may eaſily be quenched, which after it hath kindled a flame, will baffle all your induſtry. Improve that holy ordinance which you have been celebrating, to this ſalutary purpoſe. The contemplation of a crucified Saviour, is an excellent mean to aſſiſt you in crucifying the fleſh. When your appetites ſolicit any unlawful indulgence, remember him who had not even the common accommodations of nature. When your fleſh requires eaſe and pleaſure, think of him who pleaſed not, or

minded not himſelf, but for your ſakes ſubmitted to hunger and thirſt, wearineſs and watching, pain and reproach, and at laſt to an ignominious death. When riches inflame your deſires, reflect on the hiſtory of Jeſus, "who, though he was rich, for "your ſakes became poor, that ye through "his poverty might be made rich." When the deſire of applauſe, or the fear of cenſure from man, tempt you to deſert the path of duty, then remember him who for you made himſelf of no reputation, gave his head to be crowned with thorns, and his body to be arrayed with the garb of deriſion, and was ſuſpended on a croſs in the company of malefactors. In all theſe views, let your eyes be directed to Jeſus the author and finiſher of your faith. Above all, depend much on the grace of God, and pour out your ſouls in fervent ſupplications for the Spirit of promiſe, by whoſe aſſiſtance alone you can mortify the deeds of the body, and crucify the fleſh, with its affections and luſts. Principles of philoſophy may reſtrain our evil paſſions; but nothing leſs than the omnipotent power of divine

grace

grace can overcome them. Plead therefore earneſtly, that He who is now aſcended upon high, and hath received gifts for men, may grant you every needful ſupply in this difficult warfare: that ſo, when you have fought the good fight, and overcome your enemies, both within and without you, you may be publicly acknowledged and acquitted in the day of judgment, and made perfectly happy in the full enjoyment of God for ever. *Amen.*

SERMON XVII.

PSALM iv. 6, 7.

There be many that ſay, Who will ſhew us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. Thou haſt put gladneſs in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increaſed.

THE chief diſtinction between a child of God, and a man of the world, lies in the prevailing tendency of their deſires. Both of them are engaged in the purſuit of happineſs. But the one aims at nothing higher than the preſent gratification of his appetites, while the other riſes above this world, and aſpires at the ſupreme felicity of his immortal nature. The one ſeeks information from every quarter, concerning the object of his purſuit: the other aſks the bleſſing directly from the Giver of all

all good. The one ſeeks a happineſs ſeparated from God: the whole earth, without the light of God's countenance, would appear to the other a barren wilderneſs, and a place of exile.—I propoſe, in diſcourſing on this ſubject,

Firſt, To make a few remarks on the Pſalmiſt's deſcription of theſe oppoſite characters.

Secondly, To illuſtrate the two following propoſitions, which naturally ariſe from the text, namely, That worldly men have little cauſe to rejoice in the temporal advantages which they poſſeſs; and that the light of God's countenance is ſufficient to gladden the heart of a ſaint in all circumſtances whatſoever.

The illuſtration of theſe particulars will give riſe to a practical improvement of the ſubject.—Let us,

Firſt, Attend to the deſcription of worldly men in the firſt part of the 6th verſe, "There be many that ſay, Who will ſhew "us any good?"—It is obvious, in the

1*ſt* place, That this queſtion betrays a

great degree of inward diſſatisfaction and perplexity. They ſpeak like men who have no reliſh for what they poſſeſs, and who are utterly at a loſs to what hand to turn for enjoyment. They do not aſk, Who will ſhew us the *chief good?* But, "Who will "ſhew us *any good?*" any thing to fill up the craving vacuity of our minds: a plain intimation, that hitherto they have been miſerably diſappointed in their purſuits, and that at the time of the queſtion they cannot find any thing in their lot that deſerves the name of good. They are unacquainted with happineſs, though they have been always in ſearch of it, and neither know wherein it conſiſts, nor how it is to be obtained.—It deſerves our notice,

2*dly*, That the only good which they inquire for is ſome preſent ſenſible enjoyment, which may be pointed out to the eye of ſenſe, and may be immediately laid hold of. "Who will *ſhew* us any good?" They are ſtrangers to the operation of that "faith, which is the ſubſtance of things "hoped for, and the evidence of things "not ſeen." They look not "at the things "which

"which are unſeen and eternal;" their views are confined within the narrow limits of this preſent life; and they covet no other portion than they ſuppoſe may be found in the world of ſenſe.—It may be obſerved,

3*dly*, That they make no diſcrimination of the objects which they ſeek after. *Any good* will be welcome to them: let it be good food, or good clothing; a good eſtate by lawful means, or a good eſtate by any means whatever; a good bargain in buſineſs, or a good booty by theft or plunder: no matter what it is, provided it gives them pleaſure in the mean time, or relieves them from the irkſome labour of thinking on themſelves, and on the great end for which they were made.—Once more, in the

4*th* place, You obſerve, that amidſt all their diſſatisfaction with their preſent ſtate, and their eager deſires after ſomething better, they do not turn their thoughts at all to God, but ſeem rather determined to baniſh the remembrance of him from their minds. They ſeek counſel from others, but none from him: they inquire at weak

and erring mortals like themſelves, but they neither aſk wiſdom nor grace from God.

Such is the repreſentation which the Pſalmiſt gives us of the temper and of the language of worldly men. He further tells us, that the character of which he gives this deſcription, was a common one in his time: "There be many that ſay, Who will ſhew "us any good?" And it is but too apparent, that multitudes of men do ſtill exhibit the ſame temper. They have no reliſh for ſpiritual and divine enjoyments; their only care is, "What they ſhall eat, and what they "ſhall drink, and wherewithal they ſhall be "clothed."—"They labour abundantly for "the meat which periſheth, but not at all "for that meat which endureth unto ever-"laſting life." And though they meet repeated diſappointments in every new experiment; yet, inſtead of ſeeking after happineſs where it is alone to be found, they ſtill renew the fruitleſs ſearch among the creatures around them, and cry out with as much keeneſs as ever, "Who will ſhew us "any worldly good?"

Let us now turn our eyes to a different object,

ject, and conſider the temper of a child of God, as it is beautifully deſcribed by the Pſalmiſt. Whilſt others ſay, "Who will "ſhew us any good?" the language of his heart is, "Lord, lift thou upon me the "light of thy countenance." He, too, ſeeks what is good; for the deſire of happineſs is common to all.——But you will obſerve,

1*ſt*, That it is not *any* good that will ſatisfy him: he cannot feed upon huſks; it is a real and a ſubſtantial good that he ſeeks after. Nay, it is the chief good. He diſdains the thought of having any thing leſs than this for the portion of his ſoul. He knows that all other ſources of enjoyment are no better than "broken ciſterns, which "can hold no water;" adapted indeed to ſupply the wants of the body, but in no reſpect ſuited to the immortal ſpirit, either as the objects of its choice, or the ſources of its happineſs.—And as nothing can ſatisfy him but a real and permanent good, ſo we find,

2*dly*, That he knows where that good is to be found. He has no need to ſolicit in-

formation from every one he meets. He knows that the favour of God, and the ſenſe of his loving kindneſs, are the only ſources of true happineſs. Here therefore he fixeth his choice, and is perfectly ſatisfied that he is right in doing ſo.

The worldly mind is in a ſtate of perpetual fluctuation. Having no determinate object in view, it runs wild in purſuit of every deluſive image of good; and when diſappointed in one object, only feels a more intenſe deſire to ſeek its gratification in another.

But the enlightened mind ſeeth vanity engraved, in deep and legible characters, on all things below the ſun; and therefore looks beyond and above them for its portion, ſaying with the devout Pſalmiſt, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and "there is none upon earth whom I deſire "beſide thee. My fleſh and my heart "faileth: but God is the ſtrength of my "heart, and my portion for ever."—I obſerve, in the

3*d* place, That a child of God goes directly to God himſelf, and begs the bleſſing

from him. He loſes no time in wandering among the creatures, or in making experiments of ſenſual pleaſure; but takes the ſhorteſt road to the object he purſues. He flies to the arms of his Father, and implores that he would ſmile on him, and grant him his ſalvation. Senſible at the ſame time of his unworthineſs, he claims nothing as a debt; but what he aſks, he prays for as a free unmerited gift, fetching all his arguments from his mercy, and pleading with him for his own name's ſake, "O Lord, lift thou upon "me the light of thy countenance."—Once more, in the

4*th* place, It deſerves our notice, that the Pſalmiſt, in the name of all the godly, uſeth this prayer in direct oppoſition to the carnal language of worldly men, who are continually crying, "Who will ſhew us any "good?" Hereby intimating to us, that a child of God can reliſh no ſweetneſs in any inferior good, till he be aſſured of the divine favour; and that when this great bleſſing is obtained, nothing amiſs can come to him. Even amidſt the abundance of outward things, he mourns and languiſheth, as long

long as he apprehends God to be at a diſtance from him. And no ſooner doth he behold his reconciled countenance, than he forgets every outward calamity, and can rejoice in the loweſt ſtate of poverty and diſtreſs.

In a word, to the ſpiritual man the favour of God is the one thing needful. As to other things, which may be either good or bad, as they are uſed, he dares not be peremptory in his choice; "For who knoweth "what is good for man in this life?" But the favour of his God he cannot want. Here all his deſires centre, and here he hath treaſured up all the wiſhes of his heart.

Having thus conſidered the Pſalmiſt's deſcription of theſe two oppoſite characters in the text, let us now proceed,

Secondly, To illuſtrate the propoſitions which ariſe from this compariſon—The

Firſt which I mentioned was, That worldly men have little cauſe to rejoice in the temporal advantages which they poſſeſs.

Stretch your imaginations to the utmoſt; fancy to yourſelves a man raiſed above all his

his fellows, enjoying every thing that his heart can wiſh, obeyed and honoured by all around him; let luxury furniſh out his houſe and table; let proſperity attend his ſteps, and crown his undertakings with glory. Add to theſe advantages, if you will, the ſplendid titles of king and hero; and when you have finiſhed the gaudy picture, ſay, what doth the value of it amount to?

1*ſt*, May not all theſe outward things conſiſt with the preſent miſery of the perſon who poſſeſſeth them? may not the man who hath reached the ſummit of earthly grandeur, be the wretched ſlave of his own paſſions, and ſuffer all the torments of a diſeaſed mind? Who have, in fact, held the moſt complaining language on the ſubject of human life? Have not thoſe who have drunk deepeſt of the cup of proſperity, and whoſe minds, ſatiated with pleaſure, have become the prey of ſpleen and diſappointment. Unleſs, therefore, we can finiſh the deſcription of the proſperous man, by ſaying, that his ſoul is as flouriſhing as his body, and that his eternal intereſt is as well ſecured as his temporal advantages ſeem to be,

be, all that we have ſuppoſed him to poſſeſs muſt go for nothing. He is indeed more ſumptuouſly miſerable than any of his fellow-creatures, but cannot be allowed to have the leaſt reaſonable cauſe of joy.

God ſeeth not as man ſeeth. Man looketh on the outward appearance, but God ſearcheth the heart. Accordingly, he ſpeaks a language very different from the men of the world, and calls thoſe "wretched and miſerable, and poor, and blind, and naked," who think themſelves, and perhaps are thought by others, to be "rich, and increaſed in goods, and to ſtand in need of nothing." And will any wiſe man then rejoice in theſe outward circumſtances, which may ſo eaſily conſiſt with the real miſery of the perſon who poſſeſſeth them? —Eſpecially if we conſider,

2*dly*, That theſe very things are frequently the means of making men miſerable, and of fixing them in that deplorable ſtate. How many have been fruitful in the low valley of adverſity, who have proved barren, after they removed their habitations to the high mountains of proſperity? And ſhould any man

man rejoice because he must pass to heaven as a camel must pass through the eye of a needle? Is it not difficult enough to keep our hearts and affections above, when even we have little or nothing to confine them below? And should we, who already stumble at a straw, rejoice that we have rocks of offence, and mountains of provocation cast in our way? How few are advanced to higher measures of faith and holiness, by their advancement in the world? How strangely doth prosperity transform men, and make them forget their former apprehensions of things, their convictions, their purposes, and their vows; nay, their God, their happiness, and themselves? While men are low in the world and live by faith, they do good with the little which they possess, and have the blessing of a willing mind: Whereas, when they are lifted up, they often lose the inclination, in proportion as they increase in the ability of doing good, and use their superior talents only to bring upon themselves a heavier condemnation. The carnal mind commonly grows with the carnal interest, and the greatest oppofers of God have

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in all ages been the very perſons who were moſt indebted to his goodneſs. Rejoice not then in the poſſeſſion of theſe common mercies for their own ſake; and learn to value them only as they are made ſubſervient to your real uſefulneſs, and to your ſpiritual joy.—For, in the

3*d* place, All theſe things may end in miſery, and leave the owner in everlaſting wo. He who to-day "is clothed in purple and "fine linen, and fares ſumptuouſly," may to-morrow "lift up his eyes in torments." —"Weeping and wailing, and gnaſhing of "teeth" may ſucceed to his carnal mirth. If this ſhall happen, he ſhall then cry out, O that I had lain in medicinal rags, inſtead of having got this mortal ſurfeit of proſperity! Alas! are all my pleaſant morſels to be for ever exchanged for this gall and wormwood! O deplorable ſtate! O wretched iſſue of a carnal life!

Think not that I am an enemy to your joy, in urging theſe remonſtrances. My ſole aim is to lead you to that fountain, which will at all times ſupply you with the moſt exalted delight; the ſenſe of the love of

of God, and the ſure proſpect of immortal felicity. Were you in this happy condition, then ſhould I bid you rejoice even in thoſe temporal mercies, as the gifts of your heavenly Father, the tokens of his love, and the pledges of your future inheritance. I would then addreſs you in the words of the Preacher, " Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, " and drink thy wine with a merry heart; " for God now accepteth thy works." But until you have made ſure of this one thing needful, I muſt be an enemy to your ſecure and carnal joy. The frantic mirth of a madman, is an object that will caſt a damp on a mind the moſt addicted to gaiety; and I appeal to yourſelves, whether it be reaſonable for a man to rejoice, who, in the midſt of all his pleaſures, cannot have the ſmalleſt aſſurance that he ſhall be the next moment out of hell. A wicked man, ſuffering the horrors of an awakened conſcience, is indeed an object of commiſeration: but a far greater object of commiſeration is that man, who, in the depths of miſery, and on the very brink of perdition, ſtill retains his thoughtleſs and inſenſible gaiety of heart. This is

that laughter of which Solomon might well ſay, "It is mad;" and that mirth of which he ſaith, "What doth it?" How many are now in ſorrow, by reaſon of this unſeaſonable and ſinful joy? They were too gay to liſten to the grave admonitions of God's word; too eagerly bent upon their deluſive pleaſures to attend to the motions of his holy Spirit; and therefore, becauſe when God called they would not hear, ſo he now laughs at their calamity, and mocks when their fears are come upon them. It is the awful apprehenſion of this, which conſtrains me to be earneſt with you in my preſent argument. The pleaſure which you take in the enjoyments of ſenſe, is that which makes you careleſs of the pleaſures of religion. Could I for once prevail with you to enter into your own breaſts, to abſtract yourſelves from the buſineſs and pleaſures of this vain world, and to think ſeriouſly for one day upon your everlaſting ſtate, I ſhould not deſpair of convincing you, that this earth can afford nothing which can be an equivalent for your immortal ſouls. But, alas! your ſenſual diſſipated mirth baniſheth all re-

reflection, and makes you deaf to the ſober voice of reaſon. When you are confined to a bed of ſickneſs, indeed, or languiſhing under ſome painful diſeaſe, it is poſſible for a religious monitor to obtain ſomething like a patient hearing from you: but when your fleſh is in vigour, and capable of reliſhing outward pleaſures, this docile ſeaſon is no more, and all the truths which relate to another world become grating and offenſive to your ears, like the ſound of an inſtrument out of tune. I have only to add on this head, that were your mirth, ſuch as it is, to endure for any time, I ſhould wonder the leſs at your rejecting this admonition. But, alas! to be jocund, or even happy, for a day, and then to lie down in endleſs torment, is a diſmal proſpect indeed. To ſee a man laugh and play, and brave it out, in a veſſel which is ſo ſwiftly running down a ſtream which terminates in a gulph of endleſs horror, is a ſhocking ſpectacle, and calls loudly on every one who ſees it to warn the unhappy perſon of his danger. This hath been my office to you; and could I be your friend if I did leſs? if I did not obteſt you with

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all the earneſtneſs of which I am capable, to ſecure your intereſt in another world than this, and to derive your joys from ſomething better than the portion of the ſenſualiſt?

Let us now turn our eyes to a more agreeable object, and ſurvey thoſe ſolid grounds of joy which belong to the people of God.—For the

Second propoſition which I propoſed to illuſtrate was, That the light of God's countenance is ſufficient to gladden the heart of a ſaint in all circumſtances whatſoever. For this purpoſe, let us conſider from what ſources the joys of a ſaint proceed.

1*ſt*, then, He is poſſeſſed of the joy which reſults from comparing his preſent happy condition with the miſery in which he was once involved. He remembers a time when, like others, he wandered in the vanity and darkneſs of his mind, ſtill putting the anxious queſtion, "Who will ſhew me any good?" when, like a ſheep, he went aſtray, in the dark and howling wilderneſs; when he fed upon mere huſks, and ſpent his money for that which is not bread. "But now he is "returned to the Shepherd and Biſhop of "his

" his ſoul." He is paſſed from death to life: the Judge of the univerſe is at peace with him, and hath caſt all his ſins into the depth of the ſea. He hath got within the walls of the city of refuge, where the avenger of blood cannot enter; the ſword of juſtice is put up in its ſcabbard; and that Almighty Being, upon whom he conſtantly depends, hath laid aſide his wrath, and beholds him with a pleaſant countenance. And therefore, " although the fig-tree ſhall not bloſ-
" ſom, neither ſhall fruit be in the vines;
" the labour of the olive ſhall fail, and the
" fields ſhall yield no meat; the flock ſhall
" be cut off from the fold, and there ſhall
" be no herd in the ſtalls: yet will he re-
" joice in the Lord, he will joy in the God
" of his ſalvation."—But a

2*d* Source of joy to a child of God, conſiſts in the actual honours and privileges conferred upon him. He is advanced to the deareſt and moſt intimate relation to God, adopted into his family, and inveſted with all the rights of a ſon. In him that life is begun, which being hid with Chriſt in God, ſhall be preſerved and improved,

till at length it be perfected in the heavenly world. "Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righ-"teous, and ſhout for joy, all ye that are "upright in heart." To you it belongs to come boldly to a throne of grace, in the aſſured hope that you ſhall obtain mercy, and find grace to help you in every time of need: by the blood of Jeſus you can enter into the holieſt, and in every thing by prayer and ſupplication, with thankſgiving, make your requeſts known to God; caſting all your care upon him, becauſe he careth for you. He is yours who poſſeſſeth all things, and what can you want? He is yours who can do all things, and what ſhould you fear? He is yours who is goodneſs and love itſelf, how then can you be miſerable, or what imperfection can there be in your felicity? His faithfulneſs is pledged to make all things work together for your good. The moſt afflictive events, like the furnace or pruning hook, ſhall only purge away your droſs, or render you more fruitful. So that you may glory in tribulation, "knowing that tribu-"lation worketh patience, and patience ex-"perience, and experience hope that maketh "not

" not aſhamed." To conclude this detail of the privileges of a ſaint, hear how the Apoſtle to the Corinthians deſcribes them, (1 Corinth. iii. 21.), " All things are yours, " whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or " the world, or life, or death, or things pre- " ſent, or things to come; all are yours; and " ye are Chriſt's; and Chriſt is God's."— Once more,

3*dly*, The joy of a ſaint proceeds from the contemplation of thoſe future bleſſings which as yet are only the objects of hope. But in ſpeaking of theſe, where ſhall we begin? Shall I paſs beyond the dark and lonely grave, which Job hath ſtyled " the houſe " appointed for all living," and lead you upwards at once to the realms of light and joy, to ſurvey that houſe, with many manſions, whither Chriſt is gone to prepare a place for his people? No: in the paſſage I laſt quoted, we find death reckoned among the poſſeſſions of believers. To thoſe who belong to Chriſt, death ceaſeth to be the king of terrors. The ſtroke he gives doth indeed put an end to the exiſtence of the old man; but by that very ſtroke, the fetters which galled

the new man in Chriſt are broken aſunder, and the life imparted by the ſecond Adam comes to full maturity, when that which was derived from the firſt Adam concludes. When, therefore, we view death and the grave, as conſecrated by Chriſt, who died and was buried, they are no more to be ranked among the articles of the curſe denounced againſt the original apoſtaſy, but fall to be inrolled among the "things to "come;" of which every believer may ſay, They are mine. In this light did Paul behold them, when he ſaid, "To me "to live is Chriſt, and to die is gain.—I "deſire to depart, and to be with Chriſt, "which is far better."—"While I am at "home in the body, I am abſent from the "Lord. I am therefore confident and wil-"ling, rather to be abſent from the body, "and preſent with the Lord."—"O death, "where is thy ſting? O grave, where is thy "victory? The ſting of death is ſin, and the "ſtrength of ſin is the law. But thanks "be unto God who giveth us the victory, "through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord."

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But it is the reſurrection which ſhall complete the triumph of the ſaints, when that which is ſown in weakneſs, in diſhonour and corruption, ſhall be raiſed in power, in glory and incorruption. In that day of the manifeſtation of the ſons of God, when our vile bodies ſhall be changed and faſhioned like unto Chriſt's glorious body, "when "this corruptible ſhall have put on incor- "ruption, and this mortal ſhall have put "on immortality, then ſhall be brought to "paſs the ſaying that is written, Death is "ſwallowed up in victory." But how ſhall we ſpeak of the glory yet to be revealed, "which eye hath not ſeen, nor ear "heard, neither hath it entered into the heart "of man to conceive." Should I attempt any deſcription of it, I ſhould only "darken "counſel by words without knowledge."— "It doth not yet appear," ſaith the Apoſtle John, "what we ſhall be: but this we "know, that when he ſhall appear, we ſhall "be like him; for we ſhall ſee him as he "is." Here then let us ſtop. To be made like the Son of God, to behold his unveiled glory, and to be for ever with him: theſe

particulars muſt ſurely include every ingredient which can belong to the higheſt perfection and happineſs of a creature. With this great object in our eye, how well doth it become us to adopt the language of the Apoſtle Peter, and to ſay with fervent gratitude, as he did, "Bleſſed be the God and "Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, which "according to his abundant mercy hath "begotten us again unto a lively hope, "by the reſurrection of Jeſus Chriſt from "the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, "undefiled, and that fadeth not away."

Theſe are the peculiar ſources from which the godly man derives his joy. And may I not now appeal to you, whether they are not of ſuch a nature, as that no outward diſtreſs or calamity can take them away? Even when the heavens ſhall be rolled together like a ſcroll, and the elements ſhall melt with fervent heat, he will be able to look at the mighty deſolation, and ſay, when all theſe materials are conſumed, I ſhall have loſt nothing; "God liveth, bleſ-"ſed be my rock."—"The Lord is the por-

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" tion of mine inheritance," and in him I poſſeſs and enjoy all things.

And now what improvement are we to make of this ſubject?—In the

1*ſt* place, Let us inquire which of the characters deſcribed by the Pſalmiſt belongs to us. Are we among the many that ſay, " Who will ſhew us any good?" or are we among the happy few who ſeek the light of God's countenance above all things? There is no neutral perſon in this caſe. Every man that liveth upon the earth, is either " carnally minded, which is death; " or ſpiritually minded, which is life and " peace;" either a child of God, or a drudge and ſlave to the world. To which party then do you belong? What are your hearts principally ſet upon, and whither do you bend your chief and moſt vigorous endeavours? If you can find but little leiſure for the ſervice of God, and the care of your ſouls; if you can ſpend whole days without calling upon God, or reading his word; if the Sabbath appears burdenſome to you, and you join in your hearts with thoſe profane perſons whom the Prophet Amos deſcribes,

ſcribes, as ſaying, (viii. 5.), " When will " the new moon be gone, that we may ſell " corn? and the Sabbath, that we may ſet " forth wheat?" If you are conſcious that it is thus with you, I need ſcarcely inform you, that you muſt be claſſed with thoſe whoſe language it is, " Who will ſhew us " any good?" A

2*d* Uſe, therefore, which I would make of this ſubject, is, to exhort you, who are yet carnally minded, to think ſeriouſly of your condition. Ye are purſuing what will for ever flee from you. Ye are combating with a decree of him who is Almighty, even that irreverſible decree which hath pronounced vanity on all things below the ſun. Ye are oppoſing the experience of all who ever made the ſame trial before you; ye are ſtruggling with the very feelings of your own hearts, which as yet have never found that permanent ſatisfaction which they require. O then be perſuaded to relinquiſh thoſe falſe plans of happineſs by which you have been hitherto deluded, and to ſeek the favour of that God who is the only adequate portion of an immortal ſoul.

Liſten

Liſten to that kind expoſtulation and advice (Iſaiah lv. 2, 3), " Wherefore do ye ſpend " money for that which is not bread, and " your labour for that which ſatisfieth not? " Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye " that which is good, and let your ſoul de- " light itſelf in fatneſs. Incline your ear, " and come unto me; hear, and your ſoul " ſhall live; and I will make an everlaſting " covenant with you, even the ſure mercies " of David."

Laſtly, Let me call on thoſe who have been taught to value the light of God's countenance above all things, to be humble and thankful. Often recollect that mercy which plucked you as brands out of the burning, and ſet you apart to ſee the glory of the Lord, and to ſhow forth his praiſe. Often acknowledge that ſovereign grace by which you were arreſted in the broad way that leads to deſtruction, and led to him who alone hath the words of eternal life. " Who made thee differ, and " what haſt thou that thou didſt not re- " ceive?" If he who commanded the light to ſhine out of darkneſs, hath ſhined into your

your hearts, to give you the light of the knowledge of his glory as it ſhines in the face of Jeſus; adore and praiſe this diſtinguiſhing goodneſs; acknowledge, with humble gratitude, that it was the doing of the Lord. And if you would continue to enjoy the comfort which ariſeth from the light of God's countenance, be careful to abound in all thoſe "fruits of righteouſneſs, "which are through Chriſt to the praiſe and "glory of God." Our duty and our comfort are wiſely and graciouſly connected together. "Great peace have they that love "thy law," ſaith the Pſalmiſt, "and no-"thing ſhall offend them."—"The work "of righteouſneſs ſhall be peace, and the "effect of righteouſneſs quietneſs and aſ-"ſurance for ever."—"As many as walk "according to this rule, peace ſhall be on "them, and mercy, and on the Iſrael of "God." *Amen.*

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SERMON XVIII.

HEBREWS ix. 28.

Chriſt was once offered to bear the ſins of many; and unto them that look for him ſhall he appear the ſecond time, without ſin, unto ſalvation.

THERE are two things which we are taught to believe concerning Chriſt. The *firſt* is, That he once appeared in this world, clothed with our nature; that he publiſhed to ſinners of mankind a pure and heavenly doctrine; and after exhibiting, in his own conduct, a fair and unblemiſhed example of holy obedience, at laſt offered up himſelf a ſacrifice to God, to expiate our offences, and purchaſe our eternal redemption. The *ſecond* is, That this ſame Jeſus, who

who was dead, is now alive, and ſitteth on the right hand of the Majeſty on high, from whence he ſhall come at the end of the world, crowned with glory and honour, and attended with all the hoſt of heaven, to judge the quick and the dead.

We were this day commemorating, in the holy ſacrament of the Supper *, what Chriſt hath already done for the redemption of his people. There we beheld him "evidently "ſet forth as crucified before our eyes," bearing our griefs, and "wounded for our "tranſgreſſions." And now, to diſplay the riches of his grace, and our infinite obligations to love and ſerve him, let us with joy contemplate what he is farther to do, as it is ſhortly expreſſed in the latter part of my text: "Unto them that look for him, ſhall "he appear the ſecond time, without ſin, "unto ſalvation." The

Firſt thing that claims our attention, is the certainty of our Lord's return. "He "ſhall

* Preached on the evening of a Communion-ſabbath, *March* 16. 1783, a few days before the Author's death.

" ſhall appear the ſecond time." And, bleſſed be God, this comfortable truth doth not depend upon any doubtful proceſs of reaſoning, but is both ſupported and illuſtrated by a variety of the moſt clear and expreſs declarations of holy writ. The Apoſtle Jude informs us, that Enoch, the ſeventh from Adam, by faith foreſaw this great event, and ſaid by divine inſpiration, " Behold, the Lord cometh with ten " thouſand of his ſaints, to execute judge- " ment on all." It was Chriſt's promiſe to his diſciples, " In my Father's houſe are " many manſions; if it were not ſo I would " have told you: I go to prepare a place for " you. And if I go and prepare a place for " you, I will come again, and receive you " unto myſelf, that where I am, there ye " may be alſo." The angels who attended him at his aſcenſion into heaven, bare witneſs to the ſame truth. " Ye men of Ga- " lilee," ſaid they, " why ſtand ye gazing " up into heaven? This ſame Jeſus, which " is taken up from you into heaven, ſhall " ſo come in like manner as ye have ſeen " him go into heaven." Nay, we are told, that the Father hath appointed the very day

in which "he ſhall judge the world in righ-
"teouſneſs, by that Man whom he hath or-
"dained." In a word, this doctrine is not only frequently aſſerted in Scripture; but is ſo intimately connected with all the other parts of revelation, that the whole muſt ſtand or fall with it. Is not the ſacrament of the Supper a viſible pledge of our Lord's return, as well as a memorial of his ſufferings and death? And do we not profeſs an equal belief of both every time we partake of that holy ordinance? "For as
"often as we eat this bread, and drink this
"cup, we do ſhew the Lord's death till he
"come;" that is, we commemorate his death in the faith of his ſecond and glorious appearance.

This, my brethren, is an intereſting truth, and doth juſtly challenge our moſt ſerious attention. It is not more certain that we are met together in this place, than that we ſhall all meet again at the tribunal of Chriſt, where every one of us ſhall appear in his true colours, without any maſk or diſguiſe. At preſent we are but little acquainted with ourſelves, and frequently miſtaken by others; but

but the ſentence of the ſupreme Judge will rectify all miſtakes, and at once put an end to the preſumptuous hope of the hypocrite, and to the fears and anxieties of the humble ſelf-ſuſpecting ſoul. Whom he then juſtifies, none can condemn; and whom he then condemns, none dare juſtify, neither is there any that can deliver out of his hand. What a mighty influence ought this to have on our temper and practice? Were any of us to be tried for our lives at a human bar, I am perſuaded, that the thoughts of it would ſo fully poſſeſs our minds, as to leave room for almoſt nothing elſe. Yet the moſt that the judge can do in ſuch a caſe, is to determine the day beyond which we ſhall not live; while neither he, nor any man in the world, can ſay with certainty, that we ſhall live till that day come. One of a thouſand accidents may cut us off, and prevent the execution of his ſentence; ſo that the legal date of our lives may be conſiderably longer than the term which the Author of our lives hath appointed. But the iſſue of that trial which we muſt undergo at the ſecond appearance of Chriſt, is of eternal conſequence

to us. Our final ſtate is determined by it; and no power in heaven or on earth is able to defeat or alter the ſentence. And is it poſſible that we can baniſh the thoughts of this for one moment, or that we can think of it with cold and unaffected hearts? The

Second thing that deſerves the peculiar notice of believers, is the gracious deſign of our Lord's appearance. "He ſhall ap-"pear the ſecond time, unto ſalvation." Some may perhaps be at a loſs to conceive what ſhould remain to be done for the ſalvation of the ſaints, after their ſouls are admitted into heaven. But if we reflect a little, we ſhall be ſenſible, that even after the ſoul's admiſſion into heaven, there are ſeveral things to be done by Chriſt for his people, which will increaſe their happineſs, and render their ſalvation more perfect.—For,

1ſt, At his ſecond coming, Chriſt will raiſe the dead bodies of his ſervants, which will without doubt be a conſiderable addition to their felicity. The ſouls of the ſaints are repreſented in Scripture as waiting and long-

ing

ing for the reſurrection of their bodies. Hence their fleſh is ſaid to reſt in hope: and therefore, when this hope is fulfilled at Chriſt's ſecond appearance, we may juſtly conclude, that the joy of the ſoul ſhall be heightened and improved; eſpecially when we conſider the wonderful change which ſhall be wrought upon the body itſelf. When, in the morning of the reſurrection, the trumpet ſhall ſound, and the graves ſhall be opened; when that which was ſown in weakneſs and diſhonour, ſhall be raiſed in power and glory; when the formerly vile body ſhall not only be refined, but faſhioned like unto the glorious body of the Redeemer, with what triumph and exultation ſhall that ſong be ſung! "Death "is ſwallowed up in victory."—"O death, "where is thy ſting? O grave, where is "thy victory? The ſting of death is ſin, "and the ſtrength of ſin is the law. But "thanks be to God, which giveth us the "victory, through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt."

2dly, In that day the church, which is called the body of Chriſt, ſhall be complete; which muſt add to the happineſs of every

ſaint in particular. For the ſeveral members of that ſpiritual body being cloſely united, not only to the head, but alſo to one another, each of them muſt neceſſarily partake of the happineſs and glory of the whole. Muſt not every child of God be more joyful when the whole family is aſſembled in the immediate preſence of their Father, and not one member is wanting? If there is joy in heaven at the converſion of one ſinner, though afterwards he hath a waſte and howling wilderneſs to paſs thro', and many a toilſome and dangerous ſtep to take, ere he arrive at the end of his journey; how much greater joy ſhall there be in the heavenly Jeruſalem, when the many ſons of God are all brought home to glory?

3*dly*, Then alſo ſhall believers be ſolemnly acquitted by the Judge himſelf, and publicly acknowledged in the preſence of an aſſembled world. "They ſhall be mine," ſaith the Lord, "in that day when I make "up my jewels." Having waſhed them with his blood, and ſanctified them by his Spirit, he will not be aſhamed to call them brethren, but will confeſs them before his Father,

Father, and preſent them at his throne, without ſpot and blemiſh.—And,

4thly, To complete the happineſs of the ſaints, then ſhall there be the cleareſt diſcovery of all God's works, and the moſt full and open manifeſtation of his glorious perfections. When all his great deſigns are accompliſhed and brought to their intended iſſue, then ſhall the wiſe order, and harmonious contexture of divine Providence, be clearly diſcerned, the moſt intricate and perplexed diſpenſations ſhall be explained and vindicated: and it ſhall then appear, to the full conviction of the whole admiring family of God, that all things have wrought together for their ſpiritual improvement and eternal felicity. This ſhall be the day of ſolemn triumph, the grand jubilee upon the finiſhing of all God's works from the creation of the world, upon which enſues the reſignation of the Mediator's kingdom. For although Chriſt ſhall continue through eternity to be the head of his church, yet the preſent manner of his adminiſtration ſhall then ceaſe. He ſhall then deliver up the kingdom to the

Father, that God, or the undivided Godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt, may be all in all. This fact is diſtinctly aſſerted, (1 Cor. xv. 24.—28.) "Then cometh the "end," ſaith the Apoſtle, "when Chriſt ſhall "have delivered up the kingdom to God, "even the Father; when he ſhall have put "down all rule, and all authority and power. "For he muſt reign till he hath put all "enemies under his feet. The laſt enemy "that ſhall be deſtroyed is death. For he "hath put all things under his feet. But "when he ſaith that all things are put un-"der him, it is manifeſt that he is excepted "which did put all things under him. "And when all things ſhall be ſubdued "unto him, then ſhall the Son alſo himſelf "be ſubject unto him that put all things "under him, that God may be all in all."

Thus you have heard how Chriſt's ſecond coming ſhall complete the ſalvation of his people, and increaſe that happineſs at the reſurrection which commenced at their new birth; and which though greatly improved by the releaſe of the ſoul from the earthly tabernacle, was not carried to its

its full perfection at death.—The manner of our Lord's appearance, when he comes upon this gracious design, is the

Third particular in the text, which comes now to be considered. "He shall appear "the second time, *without sin*, unto salva- "tion." When in the fulness of time God sent forth his Son into this world, although he was absolutely pure and spotless in himself, yet then he "bare the sins of many;" and "he who knew no sin, was made sin "for us." Appearing in the likeness of sinful flesh, he was numbered with transgressors, and treated as if he had been the worst of criminals: But by his sufferings and death, having fully expiated the guilt of sin, he obtained a public and legal discharge, by being released from the prison of the grave, and "set at the right hand of "God in the heavenly places, far above all "principality and power, and might and "dominion, and every name that is na- "med, not only in this world, but also in "that which is to come." When therefore he cometh again, he shall appear, "*with-*

"*out*

"*out ſin*," without that guilt which was charged upon him, while he ſuſtained the character of Surety, and ſtood in the place of ſinful man.

He ſhall likewiſe appear without any of the effects of ſin, ſuch as pain, poverty, reproach or infirmity of any kind. It ſhall not be ſuch an appearance as his firſt was, when he "made himſelf of no reputation, "took upon him the form of a ſervant," and ſubmitted to all the indignities attending that mean condition. He will not come to be buffeted and ſcourged, and ſpit upon, and crowned with thorns. He will not come, O carleſs and ungrateful ſinners! to be deſpiſed and rejected in all his gracious offers. No: he ſhall come in the clouds, with great power and glory: he ſhall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels: he ſhall appear in all the ſplendour of Zion's King, arrayed with that glory which he had with the Father before the world was. Then ſhall the reproach of the croſs be wiped off, and all his ſufferings fully recompenſed. In his humble ſtate, he was attended by twelve poor and

illiterate men: but then ſhall he come with "ten thouſands of his ſaints, and all the "holy angels with him." He was introduced to his public miniſtry by the "voice "of one crying in the wilderneſs:" but then ſhall his approach be announced by the "voice of the archangel and the trump "of God." And he who on Mount Calvary was lifted up on the croſs between two thieves, ſhall then aſcend his "great "white throne, high and lifted up;" from whence, with unerring wiſdom, and almighty power, he ſhall ſeparate the righteous from the wicked, adjudging the one to everlaſting life, and the other to endleſs miſery.

Thus ſhall he appear, when he "comes "the ſecond time, without ſin, unto ſalva-"tion." And ought not the proſpect of this to have a mighty influence upon us in the mean time? "Behold he cometh with "clouds, and every eye ſhall ſee him, "and they alſo who pierced him, and all "kindreds of the earth ſhall wail becauſe "of him." How great will be the confuſion of ungodly men, when they ſee that

Jeſus,

Jeſus, whoſe grace they deſpiſed, coming to fix their everlaſting ſtate. The multitude that came determined to apprehend him in the days of his fleſh, went backward, and fell to the ground, when, with an air of majeſty, he only pronounced theſe few words, "I am He." And if the Lamb's voice was ſo terrible, how dreadful will he appear when he roareth as a lion? If his voice ſhook the earth when he publiſhed the law from Mount Sinai, how muſt it ſhake the hearts of his enemies, when he pronounceth the ſentence of the law, and dooms to thoſe puniſhments which the law hath awarded?

But the proſpect of this appearance is no leſs comfortable to believers, than it is terrible to the ungodly. Then ſhall his own people lift up their heads, and behold his glory with exceeding joy. His coming ſhall be to them the dawning of an everlaſting day. They know that he brings ſalvation with him, the full harveſt of that light and gladneſs which were ſown for them in time. He comes to wipe away all tears from their eyes, to complete their victory

victory over death and hell, and to put their whole perſons, ſouls and bodies, in full poſſeſſion of that heavenly inheritance, "which is incorruptible, undefiled, and "that fadeth not away."

If it is comfortable at preſent to hear of him, to think of his love, to commemorate his death, and to behold his beauty in the ordinances of his grace; what muſt it be to ſee him in all the glory of his exalted ſtate? When a dear relation who hath been long abſent in a far country returns to his kindred and friends, how do all concerned haſten to meet him, and to expreſs their joy at his arrival? and will not the ſaints then rejoice at the coming of their Saviour? With what tranſports of gladneſs will they cry out, Behold, yonder he comes! He whoſe blood hath redeemed, and whoſe ſpirit hath ſanctified us. Yonder he comes in whom we truſted, and for whom we have long waited; and now we ſee that he hath not deceived us, and that he hath not made us wait in vain. "Even "ſo come Lord Jeſus."—And this leads me to the

Fourth

Fourth and *laſt* particular in the text, which is the character of thoſe to whom this ſecond appearance of our Lord ſhall be comfortable. They are ſuch as "look for him." This ſhort, but ſignificant deſcription, may be conſidered as including,

1*ſt*, A firm belief of this event. One who looks for it in the ſenſe of the Apoſtle's words, is as thoroughly perſuaded of its certainty, as he is that the ſun which ſets to-night ſhall riſe again to-morrow. His faith is built on the ſureſt foundation, the word and promiſe of his Saviour himſelf: and therefore his heart is impreſſed with Chriſt's ſecond appearance as much, at leaſt as really, as if he already ſaw him coming in the clouds of heaven. But,

2*dly*, The expreſſion denotes the love and deſire of this event. The ſaints take pleaſure in the proſpect of it, and accordingly are deſcribed by the Apoſtle Paul (2 Tim. 4—8.), by this very circumſtance. They are ſuch as "love his appearing." If the ſaints under the old diſpenſation longed for the manifeſtation of our Lord in the fleſh, how much more ought we to long for that more

more glorious appearance which he ſhall make in the end of the world. The Atheiſt rejects this doctrine altogether; the profane ſcoffer ſays, "Where is the promiſe of his "coming?" Carnal ſinners are afraid of it when alarmed with the rebukes of conſcience: as when Paul preached of righteouſneſs, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled. But to the godly it is not matter of terror, but of delight. Nay, they would even haſten its approach if it were in their power. A believer, when his heart is right, will ſay, like the mother of Siſera when ſhe cried through the latteſs, "Why "is his chariot ſo long in coming? Why "tarry the wheels of his chariot? At the ſame time,

3*dly*, This expreſſion imports a patient waiting for his appearance, in ſpite of all diſcouragements. Love makes the believer to long; but faith enables patiently to wait for his Lord's coming. What though he dwells in an unkind world, wounded with ſharp afflictions, harraſſed with temptations, and oppreſſed with a body of ſin and death?

Yet

Yet all this notwithſtanding, he ſtill looks and waits with patience and reſignation. He knows that the ſecond coming of his Lord will abundantly compenſate all his preſent delays and diſcouragements. And "that this trial of their faith, being much "more precious than of gold that periſh-"eth, though it be tried with fire, ſhall "then be found unto praiſe, and honour, "and glory." But the moſt eſſential part of the character of thoſe to whom the ſecond appearance of our Lord ſhall be comfortable, is, in the

4*th* and *laſt* place, An habitual preparation for this event. They will endeavour "to have their loins girded about, and their "lights burning, and themſelves like unto "men that wait for their Lord, that when "he cometh and knocketh, they may open "unto him immediately." The beſt evidence which we can give that we truly look for him with faith and love, is our being diligent, that we may be found of him in peace, without ſpot, and blameleſs. As the proper improvement, therefore, of all that hath been ſaid, let me addreſs to you

this concluding exhortation. "Give all di-
"ligence to make your calling and election
"ſure."—"Take heed to yourſelves, leſt
"at any time your hearts be overcharged
"with ſurfeiting and drunkenneſs, and the
"cares of this life, and ſo that day come
"upon you unawares."—"Let your whole
"converſation be ſuch as becometh the
"goſpel of Chriſt." Never think "that
"you have already attained, either are al-
"ready perfect;—but forgetting the things
"which are behind, and reaching forth to
"thoſe things which are before, preſs to-
"wards the mark, for the prize of the high
"calling of God in Chriſt Jeſus."—"Set
"your affections on things above, not on
"things on the earth, that when he who is
"your life ſhall appear, ye may alſo appear
"with him in glory." *Amen.*

END OF THE THIRD VOLUME.

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ADAPTED TO DIFFERENT CHARACTERS.

By the Late Reverend

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Corrected and prepared for the Preſs by the Author *in his Lifetime.*